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The churchs ruin and restoration : the development of ecclesiology in the Plymouth Brethren and the Catholic Apostolic Church c. 1825-c.1866.

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**THE CHURCH'S RUIN AND RESTORATION:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECCLESIOLOGY IN THE PLYMOUTH
BRETHREN AND THE CATHOLIC APOSTOLIC CHURCH,
c.1825 - c.1866**

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ABSTRACT

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The Church's Ruin and Restoration: The Development of Ecclesiology in the Plymouth Brethren and the Catholic Apostolic Church, c.1825 - c.1866

This study seeks to explain the similarities between these two evangelically-inspired restorationist movements by tracing the development of their theoretical ecclesiology against the nineteenth-century background.

Brethren and Catholic Apostolics drew on a range of ideas current within post-Revolution evangelicalism, particularly in eschatology and ecclesiology. Both believed in the church's constitution by the Spirit's descent at Pentecost, its heavenly nature as Christ's body and the importance to its witness of its visibility. Both agreed that the universal church had become ruined: losing sight of its heavenly calling and hope, the church had disowned the Spirit and fallen into apostasy. Eschatological judgment, including the destruction of visible Christian institutions, was inevitable: this followed the pattern established by previous dispensations, which had all ended in divine judgment on human disobedience.

The differences between them appear in their beliefs concerning the the church's relationship to the world and the possibility of the church's restoration before the Parousia. Catholic Apostolics saw apostles as given to rebuild the universal church and recall the world to submission to Christ; Darbyites saw apostles as essential to the institutional church but denied the possibility of institutional restoration and eschewed involvement in the world; and Open Brethren confined themselves to forming local congregations along New Testament lines.

The originality of this thesis lies in its sustained comparison of these movements, which demonstrates that they owed much to earlier thinkers and to the contemporary intellectual climate. It is suggested that their high ecclesiologies may be viewed as Romantically-influenced versions of Calvinist thought, with their heightened stress on human inability and divine sovereignty and their reverence for a perceived primitive ecclesiological ideal.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BDEB - Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography 1730-1860
BS - Bibliotheca Sacra
BT - Bible Treasury
CBR - Christian Brethren Review
CH - Christian Herald
CW - Collected Works (Irving), Collected Writings (Darby)
CWit - Christian Witness
DNB - Dictionary of National Biography
JEH - Journal of Ecclesiastical History
JCBRF - Journal of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship
MW - Morning Watch
NIDCC - New International Dictionary of the Christian Church
OCP - Old Church Porch
ODCC - Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church
PW - Prophetical Works (Irving)
QJP - Quarterly Journal of Prophecy
SCH - Studies in Church History
VE - Vox Evangelica

Biblical quotations are taken from the King James Version.

Underlining and italics in quotations are given as they appear in the sources.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. The purpose and relevance of this thesis

A feature of recent evangelicalism has been the rapid growth of movements seeking to restore what they see as the divinely-ordained pattern for church life. They proclaim that God is restoring to the church the New Testament pattern of worship and church government (hence the term often used to describe them, "restorationist"), and in particular the whole spectrum of charismatic gifts; most would see the restoration of the ministries mentioned in Ephesians 4.11-12 (including that of apostle) as part of this, and essential for the church's perfecting. This thesis aims to investigate the development of a restorationist ecclesiology within two nineteenth-century groups, the Brethren and the Catholic Apostolic Church.¹ It seeks to demonstrate that their approach to ecclesiology can be viewed as an outworking of their reappropriation of Calvinist thought with its stress on divine sovereignty and human inability, itself an emphasis characteristic of the Romantic climate of thought which influenced evangelicalism greatly from the 1820s.

I have chosen to study these groups for several reasons:

Firstly, although parallels between them have been noted², and early links have been the subject of much speculation, no full-length comparison has ever been undertaken. Nor has any sustained account been given of the reasons for their ecclesiological similarities.

Secondly, it is increasingly recognised that they can be viewed as precursors of modern restorationist movements. Indeed, Walker has suggested that modern restorationism takes elements found in each of the groups under consideration and combines them.³

Thirdly, restorationists have tended to see the whole course of church history in teleological terms, perhaps because restorationism tends to spring from the conviction that its own generation is the last before Christ's return. Such a belief certainly exercised considerable influence on the development of Brethrenism and the Catholic Apostolic Church. Without prejudging the eschatological question, awareness of their

¹ The name "Catholic Apostolic Church" was adopted by the apostles on 10th January 1849 for public use, and confirmed in connection with the 1851 Religious Census (H.B.Copinger, "Annals: The Lord's Work in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries", 101, 107). This thesis uses the designat on "Irvingite" to refer to the period before that; no pejorative connotation is intended.

² E.g. D.W.Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: a history from the 1730s to the 1980s*, 95, 103, 104; O.Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, 1.36; A.Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom: The Radical Christianity of The House Church Movement*, ch.11.

³ Walker, 244.

predecessors may help us to realise that such groups are manifestations of a recurring tendency throughout church history.

Fourthly, both groups saw themselves as existing for the sake of the whole church. Such a professed breadth of vision means that they merit consideration in the context of ecumenical debate, which would also do well to meditate on their perception of the visible church as ruined.

Fifthly, the activities of modern restorationists have often resulted in heated controversy with existing churches. Restorationists have been accused of schism and sheep-stealing: traditional churches of formalism and failure. Such mutual recriminations have made more difficult the task of evaluating the contribution which such groups can make to the development of an ecclesiology which will serve the church in fulfilling its mission. A study of these nineteenth-century movements may generate more light and less heat than would a study of contemporary restorationism, since the historic churches no longer perceive them as a threat.

To many within the historic churches Brethren and Catholic Apostolics seem to belong to the religious fringe, unworthy of serious consideration. We may be tempted to write them off as the products of bizarre misapplication of Scripture, or else as a cautionary tale about the dangers of excess prophetic study, but this would be a mistake; they deserve a more sympathetic treatment than they have often received from theologians and ecclesiastical historians. This work rests on a belief that there are valuable insights to be gleaned from these movements; thus it seeks to understand them on their own terms before offering any critical evaluation.

1.2. The scope and development of this thesis

Theological studies of each movement have often been flawed by a lack of historical perspective, and there are significant areas where awareness of the process of development in their thinking, and of the background and influences which shaped it, facilitates a fuller understanding of their belief and practice. This thesis contends that both movements were very much characteristic of their time - a view which contrasts with that often held by members of each that their movement, as a work of God, was *sui generis*. Chapter Two therefore provides some account of their early historical development; 1866 has been chosen as the cut-off point because by then the main outlines of their ecclesiologies were clear, further development being substantially an outworking of these. Differences will become evident between Darby and Open Brethren, and between Port-Glasgow and the London apostles: each of these internal divergences has been underplayed by those who have paralleled the Brethren and Catholic Apostolic movements. This thesis concentrates on events in Britain and Ireland as this was where the main developments occurred, although it also covers

contacts with Swiss dissent, which proved significant for Drummond in the Catholic Apostolic Church and Darby in the Brethren.

Chapter Three focuses on the belief of both movements that the church was a heavenly body constituted by the Spirit's descent at Pentecost, drawing out the implications of this for their differing understandings of the relationship which should subsist between the church and the world, as well as noting their shared belief in some kind of dispensational pattern governing God's dealings with humanity. This serves as a backdrop for Chapter Four, which examines in detail their views regarding the church's ruined state and impending judgment, and the believer's immediate responsibility. From consideration of these areas, their understandings of the church's apostolicity emerge as of central importance for their ecclesiologies. Chapter Five therefore examines their beliefs concerning the nature, credentials and role of apostles, as well as their beliefs concerning apostolic succession.

By setting out and comparing their thinking on these issues, significant parallels emerge between Darbyite and Catholic Apostolic versions of the restorationist vision. Hence the final chapter evaluates their ecclesiological thinking, suggesting a model for understanding each group which relates them to the Reformed ecclesiological tradition and attempting to assess the significance of their thought for the modern church. While other sources for their thought have been investigated, their Reformed roots have not received the attention which they deserve, perhaps because few students of these movements appear to have come from Reformed circles: this thesis seeks to rectify the omission.

Coverage is restricted to the more theoretical aspects of ecclesiology; such areas as patterns of worship and ministry, sacramental theology, and the use of buildings have been omitted because of lack of space. Likewise eschatology, important as one of the theological roots of each movement, is considered as it influenced the development of ecclesiology, but is not given systematic consideration in itself. One final omission is that of the later history of both movements, in which the parallels of thought and action become even more striking.

1.3. Literature survey

1.3.1. Brethren

The main collection of Brethren material in Britain is the *Christian Brethren Archive* in Manchester's John Rylands University Library. This has over 13,000 items, including many letters by some of the main leaders such as Darby and Newton, as well as the "Fry Manuscript" (see below). However, there is less historical material than might be desired; Darbyites tended to produce uncritical expositions of accepted

theological themes, or else engaged in logomachy with Open Brethren. Thus historical works tended to be written to make particular points, which dictated the selection and interpretation of material; furthermore, Darby was typical in asserting the moral aspect of truth as more important and thus more deserving of his attention when writing than mere historical knowledge. Some critiques of Darby's thought were written by ex-Darbyites, which means that they present the same problems for researchers as works by ex-members of any other group. However, among Open Brethren there was a somewhat freer attitude towards internal criticism. Fuller accounts of Brethren history and theology up to 1866 include (in chronological order):

J.N.Darby's works, in particular his *Letters* (three volumes), his *Synopsis of the Scriptures* (five volumes), and his *Collected Writings* (thirty-four volumes). Prolix and often tortuously phrased, these have been neglected, even by Brethren; yet much other Brethren writing was a repetition or restatement of them, even among those who did not follow Darby into Exclusivism. My exposition of Brethren thinking therefore draws largely upon these volumes.

[J.G.Bellett *et al.*], *Interesting Reminiscences of the Early History of 'Brethren'* (c.1871). This valuable short source contains recollections of a variety of leaders. Much of it is included (with occasional unacknowledged alterations, and alongside other material) in G.W.Ware, *A Review of Certain Contentions for the Faith*, printed for private circulation among Taylorite Exclusive Brethren.

The "Fry Manuscript" (undated). B.W.Newton's recollections in old age of early events were taken down by F.W.Wyatt, and incorporated in A.C.Fry's compilation alongside letters, papers and published works by Newton. While providing a great deal of colour to fill in the picture of Brethren origins (and of the relationship between Brethrenism and Irvingism) it is not always accurate in detail, and sometimes self-contradictory. Unsurprisingly, it also manifests an anti-Darby bias. Nonetheless, it is a most important primary source.

W.B.Neatby, *The History of the Plymouth Brethren* (1901). The writer's father was well-known within Exclusive and then Open Brethren, and this is still the most shrewd assessment of Brethrenism, although it made insufficient use of early source material.

C.B.Bass, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism: its historical genesis and ecclesiological implications* (1960). This is a reworking of the author's doctoral thesis, and provides stimulating coverage of aspects of Darby's ecclesiology, though without setting him in context.⁴

⁴ References in this thesis are to the book.

H.H.Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren: 1825-1850* (1967). Although limited in the period it covers, it gives the fairest assessment of early events, as well as being extremely well documented.

Another valuable historical work is P.L.Embley's "The Origins and Early Development of the Plymouth Brethren" (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1967), summarised in the same author's article "The Early Development of the Plymouth Brethren" in *Patterns of Sectarianism*, edited by B.R.Wilson (1967).

F.R.Coad, *A History of the Brethren Movement* (1968, 2nd ed.1976). Written by a member of the Open Brethren, this work majors on the role played by the Groves-Müller axis, portraying Darby in a relatively unfavourable light.

A.C.Smith, "British non-conformity and the Swiss 'Ancienne Dissidence' - The role of foreign evangelicals and J.N.Darby in the rise and fall of the 'Ancienne Dissidence' in French-speaking Switzerland: 1810-1850." (B.D. treatise, Baptist Seminary, Rüschlikon, 1979). Smith has produced a valuable examination of the interaction between Brethren and other evangelicals in Switzerland; while he gives little space to Irvingite involvement in the same scene, he demonstrates the importance of events in Switzerland for Darby's theology and self-understanding. Tantalisingly, he notes the existence of large amounts of Darbyite papers in France and Switzerland, commenting that Darbyite lack of interest in historiography and reluctance to encourage investigation by outsiders present formidable obstacles to the location and examination of such material by researchers.⁵

F.S.Elmore, "A critical examination of the doctrine of the two peoples of God in John Nelson Darby" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1991). Elmore provides a detailed assessment of the fundamental distinction underlying Darby's dispensationalism, that between the heavenly church and the earthly Israel; this thesis seeks to set Elmore's distinction in a broader context.

Not a complete history, but a provocative interpretation from a Darbyite viewpoint, is the work of R.A.Huebner, whose three volumes *Precious Truths Revived and Defended through J.N.D.* (1991-5) include lengthy quotations and much evidence drawn from otherwise inaccessible early material, although I am not certain that this always bears the weight put upon it in what amounts to an *apologia* for Darby.

1.3.2. Catholic Apostolic

It is a commonplace of research on the Catholic Apostolic Church that material is hard to come by. In 1975 the Trustees banned the sale of literature to non-members, and

⁵ A.C.Smith, "British non-conformists", 200n.

much archival material was destroyed as churches were closed down. However, while I know of material held at the church's headquarters in London's Gordon Square which is inaccessible to non-members, I have found a great deal elsewhere. I list the main collections below.

The *Boase Collection* was assembled by Clement Boase (1846-1910), Angel-Evangelist for Eastern Scotland from 1885. As a member of an influential Catholic Apostolic family, Boase would have had access to a wide variety of printed and manuscript material. Among those who received a copy of the catalogue of his library in 1885 was the apostle Woodhouse, who wrote to thank him stating "Your collections must be I think nearly exhaustive".⁶ Most of the material passed to the British Library upon Boase's death, and another catalogue was published.⁷ This collection, while not as complete as Woodhouse's statement might imply, is still an extremely valuable source. Virtually all the more substantial works of Catholic Apostolic theology published before Boase's death are included. It is rich in nineteenth-century sermons and editions of the Liturgy, and contains a number of collections of newspaper and magazine articles relating to Irving and the Catholic Apostolic Church.

Next in significance is the *Newman-Norton Collection* held by the British Orthodox Church. This collection is not well-known and has rarely been used by researchers, but is large and wide-ranging, and unique in holding a substantial proportion of the printed sermons issued by British Catholic Apostolic churches this century; these sometimes shed useful light on the movement's earlier history.

The *Bodleian Library* in Oxford also has a collection of Catholic Apostolic material, consisting mainly of typescript reproductions of earlier writings (as well as many printed sermons and some books) purchased in 1972 from the then librarian at Gordon Square, N.C.Priddle.⁸ Many such items are not otherwise available to researchers.

Since most Catholic Apostolic material was produced for the edification of members, often in sermon form, it tended to be lacking in critical analysis of the movement. Such works as were written for outsiders were marked by a strong apologetic note, arguing the case for acceptance of "the Lord's work by apostles". Since internal criticism was impossible because of the movement's strong leadership, those who did have disagreements with the hierarchy often tended to leave the church and to publish equally unbalanced polemical works. Contemporary evaluations of the movement also

⁶ Letter attached to Clement Boase, *Catalogue of Books, Pamphlets, and Writings by certain of those in the Fellowship of the Apostles since their Restoration in 1835. With an appendix of the Publications contra "Irvingism" in the library of Clement Boase*. This catalogue, though not compiled to modern bibliographic standards, is a reliable guide to authorship of the many anonymous Catholic Apostolic tracts.

⁷ *British Museum. Catalogue of Printed Books. Accessions. Boase Collection.*

⁸ Geoffrey Groom (Assistant Librarian) to the author, 30th March 1993.

present problems for the historical theologian in the same way that works on modern restorationism do, not least because enough time had not elapsed for the significant issues to be distinguished from the ephemeral. Fuller accounts of Catholic Apostolic history and ecclesiology include:

[J.B.Cardale], *Readings upon the Liturgy and other Divine Offices of the Church*. It is significant that the movement's main theological work was a detailed and learned exposition of the Liturgy: worship and ritual were of primary importance. Although the complete work was published posthumously in 1878/9, the first volume and pages 1 to 234 of the second were originally published between 1848 and 1865, being based upon lectures given at the Central Church in London between 1847 and 1851.⁹

E.Miller, *The History and Doctrines of Irvingism* (two volumes, 1878). Written by a high Anglican to combat the leakage of clergy to the Catholic Apostolics, it provides a passable survey of the movement's historical development in the first volume, and a controversial exposition and rebuttal of its beliefs in the second. However, it should be supplemented by internal works to obtain an accurate picture.

E.A.Rossteuscher, *Der Aufbau der Kirche Christi auf den ursprünglichen Grundlagen*. (1871).¹⁰ Still highly regarded by members, this covers the period until 1838 in more detail than any other work, although it is not always easy to distinguish fact from interpretation. The translator's preface states that it was to be "carefully reserved" from the general public, only being circulated among Catholic Apostolic congregations under supervision.

[F.V.Woodhouse], *Narrative of Events affecting the Position and Prospects of the Whole Christian Church* (Part I [pp.1-115], 1847; Part II, 1885). This is recognised by members as a standard work, although it is less of a historical narrative than an exposition of the movement's theology.

R.Somerset Ward, "The Death of a Church and the Problems arising therefrom" (Typescript, c.1935). This work originated in the context of conversations between the Anglican hierarchy and *de facto* leaders of the remaining Catholic Apostolics regarding their relations with the Church of England, and demonstrates considerable pastoral and psychological insight. It is especially valuable for its lengthy quotations from Henry Drummond's letters, drawn from a now-lost manuscript book containing copies of ninety of them.

⁹ Copinger, "Annals", 98, 100, 109.

¹⁰ I have used the English translation by Miss L.A.Hewett, "The Rebuilding of the Church of Christ upon the original foundations" (MS, n.d.); I have not been able to consult a copy of another translation made by Lady Edith Percy in 1928 and circulated in typescript form.

P.E.Shaw, *The Catholic Apostolic Church* (1946). This concentrates more on events in America, and can be frustratingly shallow, but is a useful complement to other histories.

H.B.Copinger, "Annals: The Lord's Work in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" (Manuscript, updated until the author's death in 1951). As Librarian at Gordon Square, Copinger utilised many now-inaccessible internal sources. Not a history, it is nonetheless an invaluable chronicle of events, being described as "the most valuable single-source document that exists concerning the Catholic Apostolic Church".¹¹

R.A.Davenport, *Albury Apostles* (1970). Written in the 1950s by an Anglican, and marred by a failure to identify the sources of many quotations, members still consider it the best *published* history.

C.G.Flegg, "The Catholic Apostolic Church: Its History, Ecclesiology, Liturgy and Eschatology" (Open University Ph.D. thesis, published in 1992 as *Gathered under Apostles*). Flegg's background is Catholic Apostolic; his primary concern is theological rather than historical - to demonstrate the parallels with Eastern Orthodoxy. He provides an important exposition of the theological themes covered, but omits aspects of the movement's early development, there being no coverage of the influence of Coleridge, and very little of that of the prophet Robert Baxter.

M.N.Gretason, "The Idea of the Church in Catholic Apostolic Theology" (M.Phil. thesis, King's College, London, 1992). This contains less of significance than might be expected because the coverage is broad rather than deep, majors on the later period of the movement and lacks a strong interpretative framework.

This thesis also makes considerable use of letters written by and to various figures in the movement, especially Irving and Drummond. These fill out the picture of the movement's development and provide a measure of guidance in interpreting its developing ecclesiology. Many are contained in the Northumberland Collection, but others may be found elsewhere, as listed in the bibliography; relatively little use has been made of such material by modern researchers.

1.4. Acknowledgments

I wish to express appreciation of the kindness shown by those who have allowed me to consult letters and other unpublished material, or granted me access to their private libraries. Particular thanks are due to His Grace the Duke of Northumberland for permission to consult the Northumberland Collection. I also wish to express my

¹¹ S.Newman-Norton, *The Time of Silence: A History of the Catholic Apostolic Church 1901-1971*, ii.

gratitude for the help, fellowship and interest I have received from past and present members of the Brethren and the Catholic Apostolic Church, and from other researchers. Thanks are also due to my supervisors, Dr. Christoph Schwöbel and Professor Colin Gunton, for their interest and guidance. Finally, my greatest debt must be to my wife, Ann, who encouraged me to undertake this research, and our son, Kevin, who has put up with a great deal in the course of Daddy's efforts to become an "information doctor"!

2. BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

2.1. General religious background

2.1.1. England, Ireland and Scotland

The period since the French Revolution of 1789 had been marked by a political, social, and ecclesiastical turbulence which contrasted with the relative tranquility which had reigned over England during much of the eighteenth century. The worst was to come in the years between 1828 and 1832, which witnessed the delivery of three fatal blows to the traditional relationship between church and state: repeal, emancipation and reform.¹ The repeal was that of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828, opening the way for Dissenters to sit in Parliament and thus have a say in the established church's affairs.² Emancipation was that of Roman Catholics, George IV reluctantly signing the Emancipation Act in 1829³: this was widely denounced as undermining the British constitution's Protestant nature. The following year, another revolution rocked France and a Whig government came to power in Britain, pledged to parliamentary reform. When a bill aimed at achieving this failed in 1831 through episcopal opposition, popular and violent unrest ensued. The Reform Act was eventually passed in 1832 amid sustained clamour for ecclesiastical as well as political reform.⁴

Out of this turbulence were to emerge two movements, the Brethren and the Catholic Apostolic Church, seeking to interpret and respond to it. Interwoven in the background to their thought are three strands: high ecclesiology, emphasis on divine sovereignty, and longing to return to an ideal form of Christianity.

The turmoil called into question much that had been taken for granted, and there was a growing awareness of the gulf between what was and what ought to be. Many theologians sought an ecclesiology which would enable the church to stand alone as a divine institution rather than a department of state. One was Richard Whately of Oxford, who in 1826 had published anonymously *Letters on the Church*, in which he asserted the church's independence from state control on the ground that its foundation and authority were in Christ: the Tractarians took up such ideas with vigour.⁵ Whately's ecclesiology contrasted with the older high-church view of the state as guaranteeing the church's rights, and the existence of a sacral monarchy and an

¹ J.C.D.Clark, *English Society 1688-1832: Ideology, social structure and political practice during the ancien regime*, 350.

² A.R.Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution: 1789 to the Present Day*, 40-1.

³ Chadwick, 1.7.

⁴ Ibid., 1.24-47.

⁵ R.W.Church, *The Oxford Movement: twelve years, 1833-1845* (ed.G.Best), 12; S.Gilley, *Newman and his Age*, 58.

established church as the means of preservation of a Christian nation.⁶ He distinguished the Jewish dispensation, in which church and state were one, from the Christian dispensation, in which God's kingdom was no longer of this world (quoting John 18.36).⁷

Thinking along different lines, Thomas Arnold proposed a broad church in which would be united all orthodox non-Roman denominations, as the only solution to the threat posed to the establishment by an alliance of radicals and dissenters; if the church was the state in its religious aspect, then it must include more of its citizens.⁸ Similarly, Coleridge argued in *On the Constitution of Church and State* for the merging of the clergy into what he called the clerisy, "a kind of constitutive national intelligentsia".⁹ He distinguished between the "National Church", a body which not necessarily be Christian but which served to educate the state's citizens, and the "Christian Church", whose duty was to witness to divine truth, which was visible and yet not an alternative or rival form of organisation to the state: both were combined in the Church of England.¹⁰

The Irish situation, however, demonstrated the undesirable aspects of the relationship then existing between church and state. When Ireland was incorporated into the United Kingdom in 1801, the Church of Ireland had been united with the Church of England: although there had been considerable improvement¹¹, the Irish establishment was still marked by extravagance, inefficiency, and non-residence. Clergy were often appointed for political reasons and there was widespread interference in church affairs by the politicians and landlords who controlled many ecclesiastical positions.¹² The resulting dissatisfaction and unrest led to the Church Temporalities (Ireland) Bill of 1833 which proposed *inter alia* to reduce the number of Irish bishoprics: by reform, it was hoped that the restive Irish would be assured of Parliament's benevolence towards them.¹³ Though the relevant clause was dropped, the government's conduct motivated Keble to preach his "Assize Sermon" on 14th July 1833, and the meeting of high-churchmen at Hadleigh shortly afterwards concluded that the public needed to be made aware of the church's true nature and constitution, in order to counter the ignorance and low estimation of the church from which such proposals had sprung.¹⁴ "Keble's

⁶ Gilley, *Newman*, 65.

⁷ [R.Whately], *Letters on the Church*, Letter I.

⁸ Chadwick, 1.44-5.

⁹ J.C.D.Clark, 416.

¹⁰ S.Prickett, *Romanticism and Religion: The Tradition of Coleridge and Wordsworth in the Victorian Church*, 31-2.

¹¹ D.H.Akenson, *The Church of Ireland: Ecclesiastical Reform and Revolution, 1800-1885*, 69; Rowdon, *Origins*, 19.

¹² Akenson, 69; R.H.Krapohl, "The Controversial Life of John Nelson Darby", 51.

¹³ Chadwick, 1.56-7; D.L.Edwards, *Christian England*, 3.176-7.

¹⁴ Chadwick, 1.70-1.

Assize Sermon protest against the right of secular authority to suppress bishoprics and so interfere with the order of the Church was grounded in the conviction that the apostolic ministry of the Church was divinely ordained and was no mere arrangement or organizational convenience."¹⁵

According to Hurrell Froude, the conditions under which previous church leaders had allowed parliamentary interference in church affairs no longer obtained, since the civil legislature and the ecclesiastical legislature could no longer be identified.¹⁶ The Tractarians walked an ecclesiological tightrope: they opposed rationalism, liberalism, Erastianism, and utilitarianism, and wished to stress the church's divine origin and consequent independence in order to avoid political interference in ecclesiastical affairs, yet without breaking the connection between church and state.¹⁷ Believing that the ideal view of this relationship was found in the writings of men such as Hooker, they sought a return to the Anglicanism of the seventeenth century, and so to the early fathers.¹⁸ Yet their movement could be seen, not only as an attempt to turn back the clock in the face of the threat to traditional structures, but as itself the product of forces which sought radical change.¹⁹ The cultural movement known as Romanticism had engendered a longing to return to a primitive and ideal 'golden age', which translated in ecclesiological terms into a desire to rediscover the heritage of the New Testament and the early fathers, and to establish a link between the primitive church and the contemporary church. Thus the time was ripe for their confident vision of the church's calling, and in particular for their emphasis on its apostolicity.

The rise of Romanticism was also a major factor in the development of evangelical thought. It represented a reaction against the confidence in human ability and rationality which had marked the Enlightenment, stressing the value of feeling and imagination in response to an awareness of the transcendent²⁰, and the increased emphasis on personal holiness and a Calvinistic understanding of divine sovereignty which was evident in post-Revolution evangelicals may have represented a religious version.²¹ Calvinist thought had been at a discount at the turn of the century, but now experienced something of a revival as it metamorphosed from the strongly rational form seen in eighteenth-century thinkers such as Jonathan Edwards into one which stressed God's transcendent mysteriousness and supernatural action in the world;

¹⁵ G.Rowell, *The Vision Glorious: Themes and Personalities of the Catholic Revival in Anglicanism*, 188.

¹⁶ J.C.D.Clark, 415, quoting R.H.Froude, *Remains*, 3.207.

¹⁷ K.Hylson-Smith, *High-Churchmanship in the Church of England from the Sixteenth Century to the late Twentieth Century*, 126, 191.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 123.

²⁰ Bebbington, 80-2; *New Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. "Romanticism".

²¹ D.N.Hampton, "Evangelicalism and Eschatology", *JEH* 31 (1980): 189.

indeed, Calvinism became the label for an idealised form of Christianity.²² The desire to return to an age of mystery fuelled criticism of the existing church as worldly; consequently there was a reaction against contemporary evangelicalism as a product of the Enlightenment, directed at its rationalism, its compromise with the world, its complacency and self-confidence, its belief in human effort and neglect of dependence on the Spirit's power.²³ Strength was given to this reaction by the disappointment felt by many that their hopes for revival had only been partially fulfilled.²⁴

There was also a growing unhappiness with the traditional evangelical distinction between the visible and the invisible church; Toon suggests that contemporary evangelical ecclesiology was dualistic in its understanding of this distinction, and individualistic in asserting that Christ only related to individuals and not to congregations.²⁵ This dissatisfaction found expression in the desire for a higher ecclesiology, which would go beyond the "first principles" of the evangelical message²⁶, one in which the church's visible form would approach more closely the perceived ideal. A static ecclesiology was seen as less relevant or appealing, and was replaced by orders giving a significant place to a more dynamic conception of the Spirit's work - a trend engendered by the Romantic perception of this as supernatural inbreaking into the existing order.²⁷ The popular evangelical emphasis on the invisibility of the one holy catholic church of born-again believers, which had facilitated a more harmonious working relationship with non-Anglican evangelicals, came under fire from such thinkers. John Newton (1725-1807) was a prime example of an evangelical who had co-operated readily with dissenters, but such co-operation was dearly bought: evangelicalism could only become transdenominational if denominational distinctives (including ecclesiological differences) were subordinated to the "simple gospel". In the thought of such evangelicals, the question "What constitutes the true church?" thus resolved itself into "What constitutes a true Christian?" and 'evangelical ecclesiology' became, inevitably, an oxymoron.²⁸ In Reardon's words: "That they lacked a clearly defined ecclesiology was perhaps the Evangelicals' most signal deficiency."²⁹

²² Cf. Bebbington, 77-8.

²³ E.Irving, *For Missionaries after the Apostolical School: A Series of Orations ...*, xiv-xix, 22, 39-40.

²⁴ H.H.Rowdon, "The Problem of Brethren Identity in Historical Perspective", *Piero Guicciardini 1808-1886: Un Riformatore Religioso nell'Europa dell'Ottocento*, 165.

²⁵ P.Toon, *Evangelical Theology 1833-1856: A Response to Tractarianism*, 184.

²⁶ Bebbington, 94-7. Although Anglican evangelicalism was rooted in high-churchmanship, this had been defined in political rather than sacramental terms (J.C.D.Clark, 242-3).

²⁷ Toon, 91-2.

²⁸ D.B.Hindmarsh, "'I am a sort of middle-man': the politically correct evangelicalism of John Newton", *Christianity and History Newsletter*, no.11, January 1993, 8.

²⁹ B.M.G.Reardon, *From Coleridge to Gore: A Century of Religious Thought in Britain*, 31.

By the 1820s, the relationship between Anglican and dissenting evangelicals was being strained by dissenting calls for disestablishment³⁰ and a certain amount of Anglican suspicion of dissenters as potential revolutionaries. Religious societies in which evangelicals worked together were racked by controversy. Instances include the re-formation on an exclusively Anglican basis of the London Society for the Promotion of Christianity among the Jews in 1815³¹, the 'Apocrypha controversy' in the British and Foreign Bible Society during the mid-1820s, in which more radical evangelicals such as Irving opposed the circulation of the Apocrypha as advocated by moderates such as Simeon, and the events within the same society which led to the formation of the Trinitarian Bible Society in 1831 (and the controversy in the new society regarding the Irvingite leanings of one of its vice-presidents, Henry Drummond³²). Realising the unity of Christ's body must have seemed further away than ever.

The relationship between the invisible church and the visible churches was thus becoming an urgent issue. Many evangelicals became absorbed by ecclesiological questions, opposing any appearance of Erastianism and seeking the visible unity of Christ's body. Whereas more moderate evangelicals saw an established church as acceptable if under the right leadership, many radicals moved towards a rejection of establishment in principle, expressed through secession. Unease among radicals regarding the interpretation of such parts of the Book of Common Prayer as the baptismal service, which appeared to assert that those baptised were thus made regenerate, or the burial service, which obliged them to treat the dead person as a true Christian, also provoked secession. However, the seceders did not form a united body, and it is hard to say what they had in common: certainly it would be inaccurate to characterise them all as interested in prophecy, or as seeking to realise a "pure" church excluding the unregenerate. Embley suggested that the various Oxford seceders shared a negative rather than a positive motivation, and that this led to the divisions within Brethrenism.³³ Some, such as J.C.Philpot and William Tiptaft, joined the Strict Baptists. Other seceders, such as L.C.L.Brenton, F.W.Newman, and G.V.Wigram, as well as J.N.Darby³⁴ and B.W.Newton, associated with the Brethren, while

³⁰ Chadwick, 1.63.

³¹ T.D.Halsted, *Our Missions: being a history of the principal missionary transactions of the London Society for the Promotion of Christianity amongst the Jews, from its foundation in 1809, to the present year*, 20.

³² Henry Drummond (1786-1860): wealthy banker; prolific writer on economic and political subjects; an "Old school Tory"; M.P. 1810-1813, 1847-60 (H.Bolitho & D.Peel, *The Drummonds of Charing Cross*, 133-44).

³³ P.L.Embley, "Origins", 24, 156.

³⁴ John Nelson Darby (1800-82); studied at Trinity College, Dublin, 1815-19; converted 1820/1; called to the Irish Bar 1822; early attracted to Roman Catholicism by desire for a visible church authority; one brother was a Roman Catholic before joining the Brethren and the two discussed Roman Catholic theology after John's conversion ("Fry MS", 242, 249; M.Weremchuk, *John Nelson Darby*, 19, 31-6, 233n).

H.B.Bulteel spent a brief period as a follower of Irving.³⁵ Many concluded, as did many Tractarians, that the Church of England was a daughter of Rome: and while some reacted against the Church of England by becoming separatists, others decided to go back to the roots and become Roman Catholics.

Some who preceded the main wave of secessions formed part of the Calvinist "Western Schism": James Harington Evans, curate of Milford in Hampshire, was one of a number of clergy who seceded in 1815: they rejected the union of church and state, the practice of infant baptism and the lack of church discipline.³⁶ Calvinistic doctrine, then being opposed by orthodox or high-church Anglicans, was a crucial issue in the controversy.³⁷ Thomas Snow outlined the group's doctrinal position in *A Reply to a letter, written by the Reverend John Simons, Rector of St. Paul's Cray, purporting to be on the subject of certain errors of the Antinomian kind, which have lately sprung up in the West of England*. He emphasised objective truth at the expense of subjective feeling (which led to the charge of antinomianism), and Christ's union with believers as a body, to be visible through unity in faith and order.³⁸ These notes were to be prominent in Drummond's theological writings, especially his critiques of evangelicalism; this is hardly surprising, since he stated that he owed his conversion to Snow.³⁹ Evans was baptised by immersion early in 1816 and formed a church in London, soon immersing Drummond.⁴⁰ He ministered in a chapel in John Street from 1818 to 1849, observing the Lord's Supper weekly, seeking to provide opportunity for exercise of spiritual gifts and refusing to make baptism a test of fellowship (though himself practising believers' baptism) out of a desire to promote Christian unity.⁴¹ These emphases were to characterise Open Brethren.

The Calvinist teaching of the Thirty-Nine Articles was again asserted when Bulteel preached *A Sermon on I Corinthians II.12 ... before the University of Oxford, at St Mary's on Sunday Feb.6, 1831*. In this controversial exposition of Calvinistic soteriology he emphasised the Spirit's role as teacher, whose function was to lead not

³⁵ T.C.F.Stunt, "John Henry Newman and the Evangelicals", *JEH* 21 (1976): 69-70.

Henry Bellenden Bulteel (1800-1866): Fellow of Exeter College 1823; curate-in-charge of St.Ebbe's Oxford 1826; vacated fellowship by marriage 1829; baptised by immersion and founded an independent chapel 1832 (G.Carter, "Evangelical Seceders from the Church of England, c.1800-1850", ch.7; "Fry MS", 95; Rowdon, *Origins*, 61; *DNB*).

³⁶ J.J.Evans, *Memoir and Remains of the Rev. James Harington Evans*, 29.

³⁷ P.B.Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship, 1760-1857*, 229.

³⁸ H.H.Rowdon, "Secession from the Established Church in the Early Nineteenth Century", *VE* 3 (1964): 79-80.

³⁹ H.Drummond, *Narrative of the Circumstances which led to the setting up of the Church of Christ at Albury*, 6-7.

⁴⁰ R.S.Ward, 32-3; *London Review* 15 (1860): 271.

⁴¹ Bebbington, 78; Coad, *History*, 70; J.J.Evans, 59-63; J.S.Reynolds, *The Evangelicals at Oxford 1735-1871. A Record of an Unchronicled Movement; with the record extended to 1905 ...*, 166; Rowdon, *Origins*, 143.

only individuals but the church.⁴² The inconsistencies in contemporary Anglicanism implied that the Spirit's leading was not being followed: the wrong people were being ordained, and those spiritually qualified were being rejected. The King was allowed power in the church, and the clergy opposed its fundamental doctrines.⁴³ Destruction would be the result unless repentance were forthcoming.⁴⁴ Bulteel's sermon met with immediate and strong response from the establishment, and even from more moderate evangelicals: before six months had passed, he had been ejected from his charge by the Bishop of Oxford after undertaking a preaching tour to the West Country with Tiptaft, who was himself on the verge of secession.⁴⁵

Secession was not a phenomenon restricted to England. In Scotland, moves to assert the church's dignity and independence would lead to the "Disruption" of 1843, when about 450 evangelical ministers seceded to form the Free Church of Scotland, a major bone of contention being the patronage of parish livings. One of the new body's leading lights would be Thomas Chalmers, under whom Irving served as assistant in Glasgow from 1819 to 1822. Chalmers had been converted to evangelical Christianity after entering the ministry, but he retained his Moderate belief in the importance of the intellect, although repudiating the type of natural theology popular in the eighteenth century.⁴⁶

Doctrinally, just as Calvinism was again becoming fashionable in England, the traditional interpretation of the Westminster Confession was beginning to be widely questioned in Scotland. As early as 1806, the evangelical James Haldane rejected the Confession's authority, though not its doctrines⁴⁷, because Scripture alone was the rule according to which church life was to be regulated.⁴⁸ He defined a church, in terms which foreshadowed those used by Darby, as a body of believers separated from the world and bound together by love to Christ and to one another.⁴⁹ He advocated plural eldership⁵⁰, mutual exhortation as a supplement to the preaching ministry⁵¹, and the separation of church and state.⁵²

⁴² Bulteel, *Sermon*, 37.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 46-7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 50-2.

⁴⁵ Cf. Reynolds, 97n.

⁴⁶ A.L.Drummond & J.Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688-1843*, 163, 170-1; S.J.Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland*, 218-9.

⁴⁷ D.W.Lovegrove, "Unity and Separation: contrasting elements in the thought and practice of Robert and James Alexander Haldane", in *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America c.1750 - c.1950. Essays in Honour of W.R.Ward*, ed. K.Robbins, 163.

⁴⁸ J.A.Haldane, *A View of the Social Worship and Ordinances observed by the first Christians, drawn from the sacred Scriptures alone*, ch.2.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 134-5.

⁵⁰ Lovegrove, 170.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁵² J.A.Haldane, *View*, 433.

John McLeod Campbell, minister of Row near Helensburgh, was teaching before 1830 that Christ died not for the elect only but for all men, and in his ministry sought to deal with the prevalent lack of assurance of personal salvation resulting from traditional interpretations of the Confession. Others joined him in this, such as Edward Irving and Thomas Erskine, who had been influenced by his friendship with the Swiss evangelical César Malan.⁵³ The early 1830s saw several heresy trials at the General Assembly: men who questioned the usual interpretations of the Confession or who sought to appeal to Scripture as considered apart from it, were deposed from their ministries. Such names as those of Irving, William and David Dow and A.J.Scott will appear in the story of the Catholic Apostolic Church.

2.1.2. Geneva

One researcher suggests that "if we want to understand the radical ecclesiologies of the Catholic Apostolics and the Plymouth Brethren in the 1830s, we must recognise that there is at least one important strand in their origins which derives from the Genevan movement."⁵⁴ A revival (the "Réveil") had occurred in Switzerland from 1816 which resulted in a rediscovery of Calvinism by Genevan Protestants, partly through the influence of Robert Haldane (brother of James). After his conversion, Drummond broke up his hunting establishment in 1817; setting out to visit the Holy Land, he was diverted to Geneva, where he met Robert Haldane just before the latter's departure.⁵⁵ In May 1817 an assembly had been founded at Bourg de Four in Geneva along pietist lines as "a simple Christian association lacking all ecclesiastical character", those involved having no desire to separate from the national church.⁵⁶ The meeting which emerged appeared similar to those which the Haldanes had founded in Scotland, probably because of Robert's private counsel to those involved.⁵⁷ However, as a result of Drummond's influence the body became a church on 23rd August⁵⁸, and on 21st September he hosted the first celebration of the Lord's Supper in Switzerland outside the national church since the Reformation.⁵⁹

⁵³ Stunt, "Geneva and British Evangelicals", 43.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 44. Most researchers into Catholic Apostolic history have ignored this strand.

⁵⁵ A.Haldane, *The Lives of Robert Haldane of Airthrey, and of his Brother, James Alexander Haldane*, 455-6.

⁵⁶ K.J.Stewart, "Restoring the Reformation: British Evangelicalism and the 'Réveil' at Geneva 1816-1849", 190 (following E.Guers, *Notice Historique de L'Eglise Évangélique Libre de Genève*, 15; idem, *Le Premier Réveil et la Première Église Indépendante à Genève*, 99); T.C.F.Stunt, "Diversity and Strivings for Unity in the early Swiss Réveil", *SCH* 32 (1996): 355.

⁵⁷ K.J.Stewart, 158-9, 162.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 191.

⁵⁹ R.P.Evans, "The Contribution of Foreigners to the French Protestant Réveil, 1815-1850", 512; A.Haldane, 456-9.

Drummond the separatist rendered separation from the state church inevitable by his actions, and the growth of separatist "Méthodisme" was blamed on his financial backing rather than on Haldane's earlier involvement.⁶⁰ Influenced by Calvinist ideas through the "Western Schism", Drummond financed two printings of Calvin's *Institutes* in Geneva for leaders influenced by the Réveil.⁶¹ In 1819 he founded the Continental Society for the Diffusion of Religious Knowledge over the continent of Europe, along the lines of a home missionary society founded in Scotland by Robert Haldane, to employ as evangelists those who had been forced to secede from the national church because of their evangelical views.⁶² Bourg de Four maintained close links with the new society⁶³, which were later to prove its undoing.

2.1.3. Henry Drummond and the prophetic conferences

The battery of threats to the established order generated an upsurge of interest in biblical prophecy. The post-millennial optimism prevalent during the previous century had been seriously undermined. In its place rose a more sombre expectation that the world would get progressively worse, and that no millennium could begin until Christ returned: society was beyond human efforts to secure its redemption. It was axiomatic for advocates of pre-millennialism that the dark days in which they found themselves were the ones immediately preceding Christ's return, and many sought fulfilment of biblical prophecies in current events. The French Revolution was seen as a literal fulfilment of prophecy, and interpreters sought to crack the prophetic code, using this as the key.⁶⁴ In striking contrast to previous millenarian movements, there was little expectation of major social reversals to come with the millennium⁶⁵ - quite the reverse: eschatology was seen as upholding the established order, perhaps because the new doctrine originated among the higher social classes. In reaction to social unrest, they sought to defend the established order as divinely-ordained, often viewing attempts to reform church or state as tantamount to revolution.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ R.P.Evans, 513; K.J.Stewart, 155. The epithet "Méthodiste" was commonly applied in French-speaking areas to those touched by the Réveil (R.P.Evans, 505n). Drummond and Haldane were responsible for taking *baptist* views to Geneva (K.J.Stewart, 161n, following A.Bost, *Mémoires pouvant servir à l'histoire du réveil religieux des Eglises Protestantes de la Suisse et de la France, et à l'intelligence des principales questions théologiques et ecclésiastiques du jour*, 1.379).

⁶¹ L.Maury, *Le Réveil Religieux dans l'église Réformée à Genève et en France (1810-1850)*, 1.78-9; K.J.Stewart, 254, following Guers, *Le Premier Réveil*, 223.

⁶² A.Haldane, 484.

⁶³ R.P.Evans, 67.

⁶⁴ E.R.Sandeén, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American millenarianism 1800-1930*, 6-7.

⁶⁵ Bebbington, 83.

⁶⁶ Edwards, 3.101.

As part of this eschatology, the expectation arose that Christ's return would be preceded by an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in fulfilment of biblical prophecy of the "latter rain" (Joel 2.28-32). One writer who did much to encourage this expectation was the Anglican evangelical J.Haldane Stewart. As a result of time spent in Lausanne and contacts with the Swiss Réveil, Stewart began to give more place in his thinking to the Spirit's ministry⁶⁷, and in 1821 he issued a call to Christians of all denominations to unite in prayer for the Spirit to be poured out upon the whole church, entitled *Thoughts on the Importance of Special Prayer for the General Outpouring of the Holy Spirit*. This had an immediate and widespread influence. Stewart gave five reasons for engaging in such prayer: the eventful and turbulent times in which his readers lived (which had shown the inadequacy of human means for improving the world), the fact that Christ's kingdom was to be established by the Spirit's agency, the predictions in Scripture of an outpouring of the Spirit (to be preceded by prayer), the desirability of the spiritual consequences of such an outpouring, and the personal benefit to be derived from such prayer. Many of Stewart's themes would re-appear in Brethren and Catholic Apostolic thought, while the Evangelical Alliance saw his call to prayer as a root cause of its foundation in 1846.⁶⁸

Stewart's call to prayer fuelled the longing felt by many for Christ's return, divine inbreaking being seen as the only hope for the world. Irving had come to share this longing, as had Drummond. Irving became friendly with Drummond through preaching for the Continental Society in 1825, and joined its business committee in 1826.⁶⁹ Drummond introduced Irving to an eschatological work which was to influence him greatly - *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty*, by "Ben Ezra", the pseudonym of a Chilean Jesuit, Manuel Lacunza (1731-1801).⁷⁰ Drummond seems by this time to have returned to Anglicanism, and began to disengage from evangelicalism after Lewis Way (secretary of the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews and vice-president of the Continental Society⁷¹) showed him that few evangelicals believed in the prophesied restoration of the Jews to Palestine. The Albury conferences originated in Way's proposal for meetings to study the church's situation and prospects in the light of prophecy⁷², which Drummond hoped would "recover the church out of its delusion."⁷³ Invited to meet at Drummond's home,

⁶⁷ T.C.F.Stunt, "Geneva and British Evangelicals in the early nineteenth century", *JEH* 32 (1981): 37-8.

⁶⁸ R.Rouse & S.Neill (eds.), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*, 346.

⁶⁹ Carter, 244; K.J.Stewart, 328.

⁷⁰ Carter, 245; cf. E.Irving, *Preliminary Discourse to the Work of Ben Ezra: entitled The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty*, 17-23.

⁷¹ K.J.Stewart, 327.

⁷² Rossteuscher, 22.

⁷³ H.Drummond, *Narrative*, 7.

Albury Park in Surrey, participants from all denominations convened each Advent from 1826 to 1829, and finally in July 1830.⁷⁴

Irving stated that it was agreed that nothing of an authoritative nature should be published by the participants⁷⁵, but the subjects covered were dealt with in *Dialogues on Prophecy*, which Drummond edited. He felt keenly the lack of positive response to the Albury message from the church at large, believing this to be an essential prerequisite for reaching a proper understanding of prophecy and thus for preparing the church to meet her returning Lord.⁷⁶ The Albury circle's conclusions exercised considerable influence on Irvingite ecclesiological development, and he summarised them up to 1829 as being:

1. That the present Christian Dispensation is not to pass insensibly into the millennial state by gradual increase of the preaching of the Gospel; but that it is to be terminated by judgments, ending in the destruction of this visible Church and polity, in the same manner as the Jewish dispensation has been terminated.
2. That during the time that these judgments are falling upon Christendom, the Jews will be restored to their own land.
3. That the judgments will fall principally, if not exclusively, upon Christendom, and begin with that part of the Church of God which has been most highly favoured, and is therefore most deeply responsible.
4. That the termination of these judgments is to be succeeded by that period of universal blessedness to all mankind, and even to the beasts, which is commonly called the Millennium.
5. That the second Advent of Messiah precedes or takes place at the commencement of the Millennium.
6. That a great period of 1260 years commenced in the reign of Justinian, and terminated at the French Revolution; and that the vials of the Apocalypse began then to be poured out; that our blessed Lord will shortly appear, and therefore it is the duty of all, who so believe, to press these conclusions on the attention of all men.⁷⁷

The conferences were also marked by the influence of Calvinist thought: Aristo, one of the speakers in *Dialogues on Prophecy*, commented: "I saw also in the history of the church, that in proportion as she became Arminian she relapsed into the world, and that in proportion as she became Calvinistic she came up out of the world ..."⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Irving gave a glowing account of the first conference (*Preliminary Discourse*, 197-203). He, with Drummond and J.J.Strutt, decided the questions to be studied (Drummond to Strutt, 21st July 1827, 12th February and 15th April 1828, Strutt Archives).

⁷⁵ Irving, *Preliminary Discourse*, 199.

⁷⁶ [H.Drummond], ed., *Dialogues*, 1.iv.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.ii-iii.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.223; Aristo was identified with Irving in "The Albury Meetings, November 1826", although Drummond did not pretend to be recording actual speeches made.

The main means for disseminating the new views was the quarterly *The Morning Watch*, which appeared from 1829 to 1833; financed by Drummond, it was edited by J.O.Tudor, who later became an apostle.⁷⁹ It began with an emphasis on eschatology and Christology, supporting Irving through his controversies with the Church of Scotland, and when the miraculous gifts appeared it devoted much space to examining and defending them against evangelical opposition. A concurrent shift in emphasis to ecclesiology became apparent, probably because radical evangelicals at the heart of the Albury group were, like their fellows elsewhere, increasingly preoccupied with such issues.

Although increasing extremism in prophetic interpretation had led to attendance tailing off⁸⁰, it was the appearance of charismatic gifts in the west of Scotland early in 1830 which seems to have split the Albury circle. No report was published of the proceedings of that year's conference, which was called in response to news of the manifestations, but we know that participants concluded that such things were to be prayed for, and that claims to them should be carefully investigated.⁸¹ Catholic Apostolics honoured the work of the Albury circle and others; however, they were seen as laid aside in preparation for the next stage of the Lord's work in preparing the church for His return - the restoration of apostleship.⁸²

2.2. Realising the body of Christ: the Brethren

2.2.1. Early events in Ireland

Early nineteenth-century Dublin evangelicalism was a phenomenon which crossed denominational boundaries. Negatively, it was united by anti-Catholicism; positively, by interdenominational societies and drawing-room Bible studies.⁸³ Darby was not the first to secede from the Irish establishment during this period⁸⁴: two erstwhile ministers at Bethesda, an evangelical Anglican proprietary chapel, anticipated aspects of Brethren doctrine and practice. Thomas Kelly had seceded in 1797 after the Archbishop of Dublin had inhibited him from preaching in the city's churches.⁸⁵ He

⁷⁹ Copinger, "Annals", 12. It must not be assumed that views expressed in the *Morning Watch* were always those of the later Catholic Apostolic Church, although its most significant contributors did join the new movement.

⁸⁰ Cf. *A Biographical Sketch of Alexander Haldane of the Inner Temple, Barrister-at-Law, J.P.*, 13.

⁸¹ R.A.Davenport, 27; H.Drummond, *Narrative*, 13.

⁸² Rossteuscher, 108.

⁸³ Embley, "Origins", 14; T.C.F.Stunt, "Evangelical Cross-Currents in the Church of Ireland, 1820-1833", *SCH* 25 (1989): 220.

⁸⁴ Rowdon details similar secessions in Ireland and Scotland (*Origins*, 22-6; "Secession", 76-8).

⁸⁵ R.S.Brooke, *Recollections of the Irish Church*, 193.

rejected ordination, and practised baptism on profession of faith.⁸⁶ John Walker, a fellow of Trinity College, seceded in 1804 and set up meetings marked by extreme Calvinism, rejection of ordination, separation from other Christians except for purposes of proselytising, and a very close communion.⁸⁷ He looked for a drawing together of true disciples in separation from the world and from false churches.⁸⁸ Walker left for London in 1819, but in 1821 his meeting numbered 130, including twelve former clergy, and celebrated the Lord's Supper weekly as the main meeting.⁸⁹ Links between these secessions and Darby's are hard to trace; there are parallels between Walker's ecclesiology and Darby's but no evidence of dependence, and Darby himself was not converted until around 1820, after Walker left Dublin.⁹⁰

Darby was ordained deacon on 7th August 1825⁹¹ and priest on 19th February 1826, taking a curacy in the parish of Powerscourt, south of Dublin, under the evangelical Robert Daly.⁹² Darby recalled his views then in an "Analysis of Dr. Newman's Apologia pro Vita Sua", published in 1866:

I know the system. I knew it and walked in it years before Dr. Newman ... thought on the subject; and when Dr. Pusey was not heard of. I fasted in Lent so as to be weak in body at the end of it; ate no meat on week days - nothing till evening on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, then a little bread or nothing; observed strictly the weekly fasts, too. I went to my clergyman always if I wished to take the sacrament, that he might judge of the matter. I held apostolic succession fully, and the channels of grace to be there only. I held thus Luther and Calvin and their followers to be outside. I was not their judge, but I left them to the uncovenanted mercies of God. I searched with earnest diligence into the evidences of apostolic succession in England, and just saved their validity for myself and my conscience. The union of church and state I held to be Babylonish, that the church ought to govern itself, and that she was in bondage but was the church.⁹³

He was therefore shocked when Archbishop Magee of Dublin, in a charge to his clergy in October 1826, represented church and state as two aspects of the same Christian community and classed the clergy in their temporal capacity as instruments of state.⁹⁴ Magee saw no place for a system which maintained a spiritual supremacy independent

⁸⁶ Rowdon, "Secession", 78.

⁸⁷ A. Haldane, 343; J. Walker, *Essays and Correspondence, chiefly on Scriptural Subjects*, 1.195-7.

⁸⁸ Rowdon, "Secession", 78, quoting [J. Walker], *Letters on Primitive Christianity; in which are Set Forth the Faith and Practice of the Apostolic Churches*, 32, 92.

⁸⁹ *Brief Memorials of the Rev. B. W. Mathias*, 90-1, 93-5; C. P. Martin, "Recollections of the Walkerite or so-called Separatist Meeting in Dublin", *JCBRF* 21 (1971): 4, 9-10; Rowdon, "Secession", 77-8.

⁹⁰ Weremchuk, 238n.

⁹¹ Embley, "Origins", 61-2.

⁹² Weremchuk, 38.

⁹³ Darby, *CW*, 18.156.

⁹⁴ W. Magee, *A Charge Delivered at His Triennial and Metropolitan Visitation in St. Patrick's Cathedral, on Tuesday the 10th of October 1826*, 5.

of the state, especially if that supremacy was foreign⁹⁵, and on 1st February 1827 the Irish clergy drew up a petition claiming state protection against Roman aggression.⁹⁶ Magee later added the requirement that converts from Catholicism take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy.⁹⁷ The steady influx of converts ceased, and Darby responded vigorously, circulating a paper entitled "Considerations Addressed to the Archbishop of Dublin and the Clergy who Signed the Petition to the House of Commons for Protection".⁹⁸ At the end of September, Darby resigned his curacy.⁹⁹

The great change in his thinking which Darby described as his "deliverance" occurred soon after, while convalescing in Dublin in December 1827 and January 1828 following a riding accident.¹⁰⁰ Darby had been exercised regarding the authority of Scripture and was apparently stopped from converting to Rome by realising that Scripture remained as authoritative even if there should be no longer any church.¹⁰¹ The writings of the evangelical commentator Thomas Scott (1747-1821) seem to have played a crucial role.¹⁰² In a marginal note next to 2 Timothy 3 in his Greek Testament, Darby wrote: "I think Scott's essays [*Essays on the Most Important Subjects in Religion*] gave a strong determination to my thought at one time, while my mind was working upon it [the way of salvation]".¹⁰³ It seems that Scott's writings led Darby to embrace Scripture as his sole or supreme authority, apparently by the time he wrote "Considerations Addressed to the Archbishop"¹⁰⁴, since he went on to mention his previous leanings towards Roman Catholic views concerning the visible church's authority and his poor reading of Scripture. As he later wrote in description of his deep exercises of soul, "Did heaven and earth, the visible church, and man himself, crumble into nonentity, I should, through grace, since that epoch, hold to the word as an unbreakable link between my soul and God."¹⁰⁵ His "deliverance" was the

⁹⁵ Ibid., 27, 30.

⁹⁶ Reproduced in Weremchuk, 212-3.

⁹⁷ Coad, *History*, 27; Weremchuk, 45-6.

⁹⁸ Darby, *CW* 1.1-19.

⁹⁹ Huebner, *Precious Truths*, 1.35, following F.Gill, "Matthew 18.20", 108-9; cf. [J.N.Darby], *Letters*, 3.352 [1855], 2.455 (21st September 1876).

¹⁰⁰ [Darby], *Letters*, 3.354 [1855]; Rowdon, *Orig ns*, 45-6; Weremchuk, 62.

¹⁰¹ Darby, *CW*, 1.38.

¹⁰² Scott's commentaries were viewed as a hermeneutical 'gold standard' by many evangelicals (cf. L.E.Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*, 3.347).

¹⁰³ Weremchuk, 204.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Darby, *CW*, 1.19. The turmoil of the years preceding Darby's "deliverance" could have resulted from his being impressed by the separatists but being unable to reconcile their position with his high Anglicanism (Krapohl, 36n). This dilemma would have been resolved by Scripture replacing the church as the final authority, freeing Darby to follow the separatists' example.

¹⁰⁵ Darby, *CW*, 6.5.

culmination of this change, bringing a new sense of freedom and security arising out of an awareness of being united with Christ and seated with him in heavenly places.¹⁰⁶

At the beginning of 1828, Darby's friend Bellett¹⁰⁷ visited London, where he met others, apparently of the Albury circle, who awakened his interest in prophetic truth.¹⁰⁸ He wrote to Darby about his discovery, and found on his return that Darby's mind had been moving in a similar direction. Study of Isaiah 32 had led Darby to conclude that there were separate futures for the heavenly church and the earthly Israel.¹⁰⁹ This distinction was at the heart of what became known throughout the evangelical world as "dispensationalism".

By now several new seceding groups had appeared. The first centred on Edward Cronin, a Roman Catholic who after conversion had settled with the Independents.¹¹⁰ Moving to Dublin in 1826, he was told that he might take communion at an Independent chapel as a visitor, but could not continue to do so without joining a local church. Believing that participation at the Lord's Table expressed membership of Christ's body rather than of a particular congregation, Cronin refused and began meeting with three friends to break bread, eventually being offered a room by Francis Hutchinson, son of an Anglican archdeacon.¹¹¹ Denying the necessity of "special membership", they were seen as "Evangelical malcontents".¹¹²

Another group included Anglicans and Dissenters¹¹³: its development was described by William Collingwood. About 1825, three friends could find no church in which they could meet together.¹¹⁴ "At one time they seemed to have found it, yet, at the last moment, in conference with the elders of that community, conditions were required which would defeat the object they had in view."¹¹⁵ Seeing no need of a consecrated place or an ordained minister, they began breaking bread together to express their unity in Christ without severing existing church connections.¹¹⁶ "That they belonged to Christ was the only term of communion; that they loved one another was the power of

¹⁰⁶ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.624-5 (Memorandum, 1868).

¹⁰⁷ John Gifford Bellett (1795-1864): entered Trinity College 1815; converted 1817; studied Law in London; returned to Dublin 1821 (Rowdon, *Origins*, 39; Weremchuk, 31).

¹⁰⁸ Embley, "Origins", 86, citing L.M.Bellett, *Recollections of the Late J.G.Bellett*.

¹⁰⁹ [Darby], *Letters*, 3.352-3 [1855]; Huebner, *Precious Truths*, 1.23, quoting Darby, *BT* 12 (1878-9): 352; Weremchuk, 121-2.

¹¹⁰ Weremchuk, 69.

¹¹¹ Embley, "Early Development", 218-9; A.Miller, *"The Brethren" (commonly so-called): a Brief Sketch*, 16.

¹¹² *Interesting Reminiscences*, 17 (Cronin).

¹¹³ Rowdon, *Origins*, 42.

¹¹⁴ Quoted by Neatby, 23.

¹¹⁵ W.Collingwood, *'The Brethren': A Historical Sketch*, 6. The group in question may have been Walkerite (Rowdon, *Origins*, 42).

¹¹⁶ Collingwood, 6, 8; Neatby, 24.

their fellowship. In principle, it embraced all whose faith and walk showed that they had spiritual life; in practice, all such of those as would avail themselves of it."¹¹⁷ Among those involved was John Parnell (later Lord Congleton).¹¹⁸

Several Anglican evangelicals began meeting in a similar manner. Anthony Norris Groves was an occasional student at Trinity College, preparing for missionary service¹¹⁹; when visiting Dublin he preached and met with other evangelicals for Bible study. In the face of the prevalence of Roman Catholicism, denominational barriers seemed irrelevant, and by Spring 1827 this group had concluded that they were free to break bread each Lord's day.¹²⁰ Bellett recalled that in 1828 Groves expressed the conviction that "we should come together in all simplicity as disciples, not waiting on any pulpit or minister, but trusting that the Lord would edify us together, by ministering as He pleased and saw good from the midst of ourselves."¹²¹ Groves also proposed the principle on which they should unite - love of Christ rather than unity of judgment on lesser matters.¹²² Darby suggested celebrating the Lord's Supper together each Sunday, and in November 1829 Hutchinson offered a room in his house for this at a different time from local church services, initially with a prescribed pattern of worship.¹²³ Parnell joined with them and proposed moving to a public venue, which they did in May 1830, though some disapproved, feeling that it implied the setting up of a separate church.¹²⁴ Cronin's group appears to have broken up by this point, and he joined, as did Bellett.¹²⁵ Thus all three groups were now meeting together.

Significantly, Bellett and Darby were not yet ready to separate totally from the establishment.¹²⁶ Darby could have celebrated the Lord's Supper privately as a clergyman: thus his doing so in a house was no proof of his having seceded.¹²⁷ However, he became increasingly pessimistic regarding the establishment, and the

¹¹⁷ Collingwood, 8-9.

¹¹⁸ Rowdon, *Origins*, 42.

¹¹⁹ Anthony Norris Groves (1795-1853): occasional student from October 1826 until Summer 1827, by which time his high-church views had broken down; severed his connection with the Church Missionary Society as they would not allow laymen to celebrate communion; seceded from Anglicanism when challenged regarding subscription to the Article permitting Christians to bear arms; went to Baghdad June 1829 as a missionary, accompanied by several other Brethren; served in India 1833-52 (Mrs. Groves, *Memoir of Anthony Norris Groves*; G.H. Lang, *Anthony Norris Groves*; Weremchuk, 67-8).

¹²⁰ Mrs. Groves, 29, 39; Rowdon, *Origins*, 40.

¹²¹ *Interesting Reminiscences*, 5 (Bellett).

¹²² Mrs. Groves, 234 (Groves' Journal, 14th December 1833).

¹²³ *Interesting Reminiscences*, 14 (Darby), 6 (Bellett).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-7; Embley, "Early Development", 213.

¹²⁵ Huebner, *Precious Truths*, 1.41; G.V. Ware, 19.

¹²⁶ *Interesting Reminiscences*, 17 (Cronin); A. Miler, 17; Turner, 20.

¹²⁷ Embley, "Origins", 56.

final straw was a controversy over religious education in which he saw a new and threatening development - an alliance between infidelity and Romanism¹²⁸: Magee had been succeeded as Archbishop in 1831 by Whately, whom Darby considered a Sabellian.¹²⁹ If the Church of Ireland could not discipline such a man, it must be ripe for judgment.¹³⁰ The establishment Darby loved was no longer an effective barrier against Romanism or infidelity, and henceforward his writings began to call for separation from eschatological apostasy.¹³¹

Concurrently with the development of Brethren meetings, there was much interest in prophetic study. One person who fostered this was Lady Powerscourt. She had often heard Irving; indeed, in September 1830 he stayed with her while preaching in Dublin and attended a meeting at her house for prophetic study.¹³² In October 1831 she held the first Powerscourt Conference on prophecy under Daly's chairmanship, inviting men from various denominations.¹³³ In 1832 the division between Brethren participants and those from the established churches caused great tension, and after the conferences moved to Dublin from 1833 they were largely attended by Brethren: Anglicans withdrew because of the preoccupation with prophetic study at the expense of evangelism.¹³⁴ One Brethren leader, J.B.Stoney, had initially been attracted towards Irvingism, and recorded that Irvingites were present on one occasion.¹³⁵ After he and others seceded from Anglicanism and Darby's separatist note became increasingly insistent, those influenced by Irvingism "gradually drew away from us and their society was avoided."¹³⁶ Thus it is unlikely that Irvingites exercised too much influence on the development of Irish Brethrenism.¹³⁷

¹²⁸ Rowdon, *Origins*, 91.

¹²⁹ Darby, *CW*, 32.307.

¹³⁰ Rowdon, *Origins*, 91.

¹³¹ E.g. Darby, *CW*, 1.36.

¹³² Mrs. M.O.W.Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 299-300; Rowdon, *Origins*, 87.

¹³³ Reported in *CH* 2 (1831): 287. Lady Powerscourt was reputed to have established her conference as a result of visiting Albury (G.T.Stokes, "John Nelson Darby", *Contemporary Review* 48 (1885): 543), probably to meet Drummond.

¹³⁴ A.R.Acheson, "The Evangelicals in the Church of Ireland, 1784-1859", 135; Coad, *History*, 109-10.

¹³⁵ Possibly at the second Conference in September 1832, when the issue of the gifts was raised, although no details of the discussion were published (*CH* 3 (1832): 290-2; cf. [Darby], *Letters*, 1.6-7).

¹³⁶ *Interesting Reminiscences*, 21 (Stoney).

¹³⁷ However, the first Irvingite angel in Dublin was Edward Hardman, an Anglican clergyman who had known Darby and other Brethren (Rowdon, *Origins*, 100-1; J.D'A.Sirr, *Memoir of the Hon. Power le Poer Trench, last Archbishop of Tuam*, 421-3).

2.2.2. Oxford and Irvingism

F.W.Newman, brother of John¹³⁸, succeeded J.C.Philpot in Autumn 1827 as a private tutor in the household of Darby's brother-in-law in Dublin; there he came under Darby's spell, impressed by his other-worldliness and commitment to one book - the Bible.¹³⁹ Returning to Oxford late in 1828, Newman began meetings for prophetic study, and B.W.Newton¹⁴⁰ (to whom he was a private tutor) was captivated.¹⁴¹ Dissatisfied (as was Wigram, another Oxford evangelical¹⁴²) with conventional evangelicalism, "F.W.Newman introduced to me Prophetic Truth & it turned the whole current of my life." Now Newton had "something to learn and to teach", which would be his theme throughout a long ministry.¹⁴³ Newman persuaded Darby to visit Oxford in the summer of 1830, introducing him to a reluctant Newton, who was immediately won over¹⁴⁴: "Darby was the only person I knew then, who saw that separation from the world was necessarily involved in prophetic truth."¹⁴⁵

Soon after this, news of charismatic manifestations in Scotland reached Oxford and London. Darby visited the scene: "The sense he had of the want and power of the Holy Ghost in the Church made him willing to hear and see."¹⁴⁶ Newton recalled,

When Darby went at my request to see the Campbell family at Fernicarry in whom the new gifts of utterance & of healing were manifesting themselves, ... he said to me on his return that there wasn't a meeting or an interview in which the spirits did not dwell on the notion that the Israelitish blessings are all ours now. That decided me at once, & Darby too.¹⁴⁷

[Darby] returned saying he had carefully watched everything, and one thing he noticed decidedly - that was that they denied the application of prophetic Scriptures & promises to Israel._ In a moment that decided me._ It convinced me

¹³⁸ Francis (Frank) William Newman (1805-97): fellow at Balliol College 1826-30; left England for Baghdad 1830; excommunicated by Darby in 1833 (Rowdon, *Origins*, 61; Weremchuk, 50); eventually abandoned orthodox Christianity altogether, describing his intellectual pilgrimage in *Phases of Faith*.

¹³⁹ F.W.Newman, *Phases of Faith*, 27-8, 33-4.

¹⁴⁰ Benjamin Wills Newton (1807-99): studied at Oxford; Fellow of Exeter College 30th June 1826; converted through Bulteel's ministry January 1827 ("Fry MS", 43, 74, 117-8).

¹⁴¹ Rowdon, *Origins*, 60, 63.

¹⁴² George Vicesimus Wigram (1804-79): converted 1824; visited Geneva soon after; entered Queen's College 1826; refused ordination by Bishop Blomfield as being too evangelical; decided to secede as a result of the Powerscourt Conference; initiated a Brethren meeting in London ("Fry MS", 263; Huebner, *Precious Truths*, 2.253-6; Stunt, "Geneva and British Evangelicals", 42).

¹⁴³ "Fry MS", 79.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 60-1.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁴⁶ Darby, *CW*, 6.284.

¹⁴⁷ "Fry MS", 207-8.

unhesitatingly that the work was not of God, furnishing - one with a clear proof.¹⁴⁸

Newman had been impressed by news of the manifestations but Darby pointed out to him that the tongues were not foreign languages and there was no interpretation. Even so, Newman felt that the gifts were so similar to those of which Paul wrote that it was three years before he could reject them, and when he did he also moved towards rejecting Paul's teaching on the gifts.¹⁴⁹ He became increasingly unorthodox in theology, and Darby eventually declared that he could no longer have fellowship either with Newman or with anyone who received him¹⁵⁰ - the first evidence of an approach which he later adopted in dealing with Newton and Plymouth. Yet for a while there was no unanimity in Newman's treatment by Brethren: in a letter to Darby he contrasted his warm reception at Plymouth with the attitude of Brethren at "Bethesda", Bristol, towards him.¹⁵¹ Such confusion could have predisposed Darby towards Wigram's suggestion in 1838 of a central oversight meeting in London, and may have influenced him in his suspicion of Plymouth.¹⁵²

On his visit to Scotland, Darby had been accompanied by Wigram¹⁵³, who was probably responsible for an article which appeared during 1835 in the periodical put out by the Brethren at Plymouth, the *Christian Witness*, "The Verity of the Revival of the Apostolic Church in Newman-street and elsewhere examined; or, the responsibility of the true church to be ready to meet their Lord."¹⁵⁴ Wigram did not think the Irvingite manifestations genuine, but he did not rule out the possibility of the gifts being restored before Christ's return, and claimed to have experienced some such phenomena himself. Many other Brethren were initially open to the possibility of charismatic gifts being restored, and even after they had rejected the Irvingite manifestations, they felt bound to explain why their views were not to be confused with Irvingism.¹⁵⁵

However, Newton's experience of Irvingism produced an allergic reaction which undoubtedly coloured his relations with Darby. Running through his rejection of Irvingism, of Darby's later "mystical" or "impulsive" view of ministry, and of the

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 234. Elsewhere Newton qualified this, stating that "it did not so forcibly convince Darby" (ibid., 237). This is probably true, as Darby had not yet fully worked out the implications for the interpretation of prophecy of his distinction between the heavenly church and the earthly Israel, although he came to share Newton's position.

¹⁴⁹ F.W.Newman, 177-8.

¹⁵⁰ Darby, CW, 6.320; Huebner, *Precious Truths*, 1.205, quoting Gill; F.W.Newman, 55-8.

¹⁵¹ Darby, CW, 6.318.

¹⁵² Cf. Krapohl, 402.

¹⁵³ Coad, *History*, 63.

¹⁵⁴ CWit 2 (1835): 154-87.

¹⁵⁵ Charles Hargrove, an Irish clergyman who joined the Brethren in 1835, had carefully examined Irvingism (*Reasons for Retiring from the Established Church*, xxxviii) and devoted a section of his work to explaining the differences (ibid., xxii-xxxix).

Quaker aspect of his own background was an antipathy towards mysticism in any form.¹⁵⁶ Soon after his conversion, he had contrasted the silent Quaker meetings (in which he had never heard the gospel) with Bulteel's anointed ministry.¹⁵⁷ He was therefore distressed to find on returning to Oxford in October 1831 that Bulteel had become an Irvingite.¹⁵⁸ He disapproved of Bulteel's seeking to preach "in the power", and of the disorderly enthusiasm affecting members of the congregation¹⁵⁹, later explaining Tractarianism's success in Oxford as a disgusted reaction to Bulteel's fanatical extravagance: "Newmanism would never have been the success it is if it hadn't been for the flood of Irvingism."¹⁶⁰

Darby produced several anti-Irvingite works during this period. Those in his *Collected Writings* are well known: "Remarks on a Tract circulated by the Irvingites entitled 'A Word of Instruction'", and "A Letter to a Clergyman on the Claims and Doctrines of Newman Street".¹⁶¹ These are bound with writings examining Newton's errors, which Darby thought resembled Irvingism in certain respects. A less well-known series of articles was entitled "Are the Newman Street teachers (Catholic Apostolic) sent of God?"¹⁶² His statements in these concerning the number of apostles called suggest a date for the originals of Autumn 1834, and some of the material was reworked for his other writings on this subject. Darby's main arguments were that the gifts sanctioned Irving's unorthodox Christology, and that the claim to inspiration was disproved by the many failed prophecies; he also pointed out contradictions between the utterances of different "gifted persons".¹⁶³ The same consideration which led Darby to accept the final authority of Scripture, even apart from the church, predisposed him to reject the manifestations as denying the individual Christian's right to understand the Scriptures with the Spirit's aid and so judge the veracity of the gifts.¹⁶⁴ These, along with the eschatological arguments seen earlier, were to prove the stock ammunition in the Brethren armoury over the next seventy years, there being a remarkable similarity between Darby and Newton in this respect.¹⁶⁵ Yet for Irving's prophetic writings Darby retained a genuine admiration; he could say that

¹⁵⁶ Rev.J.Burnham, in conversation, 8th October 1995.

¹⁵⁷ Newton to his mother, 30th December 1827, "Fry MS", 125.

¹⁵⁸ Rowdon, *Origins*, 68.

¹⁵⁹ "Fry MS", 96, 105.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 234, cf. 105.

¹⁶¹ Darby, *CW*, 15.1-15 and 16-33. These may have been adapted for Swiss use from originals dating from 1835-7 (Krapohl, 171).

¹⁶² Serialised in *BT*, n.s.2 (1898-9); also published separately.

¹⁶³ [Darby], "Newman Street Teachers", 126-7, 142, 146, 173; cf. *idem*, *CW*, 15.20-2.

¹⁶⁴ [Darby], "Newman Street Teachers", 110-1; cf. *idem*, *CW*, 3.71, 15.1.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. B.W.Newton, *Occasional Papers on Scriptural Subjects*, 2.188; [dem], "The Doctrines of the Church in Newman Street considered", *CWit* 2 (1835): 111-28.

few writings contained so much truth, especially regarding prophecy, as Irving's.¹⁶⁶ It is significant that Darby's main arguments were not ecclesiological ones: we shall see that there were fundamental *similarities* between his ecclesiology and theirs.

2.2.3. Beginnings at Plymouth

Early in 1831, Newton was still a member of the Church of England, hoping for its reformation¹⁶⁷ Travelling to Oxford to take his final examination for holy orders, he was unsettled by reading a tract which he had picked up in Plymouth entitled *Reasons for leaving the Church of England*. Further shaken by Bulteel's sermon and the resulting controversy, he would ultimately decide to secede.¹⁶⁸ That summer, Bulteel and Tiptaft visited Plymouth during their preaching tour, preparing the ground for Brethrenism and Irvingism by their bold denunciation of the established church.¹⁶⁹ Plymouth was to prove fertile soil for Brethrenism, having been affected by Walkerite separatism and the preaching of the high Calvinist Robert Hawker.¹⁷⁰

Darby first visited Plymouth by invitation, presumably from Newton.¹⁷¹ During the six months before he arrived, Wigram had introduced Brethren ideas there¹⁷², acquiring a chapel late in 1831 where prophetic subjects could be preached on.¹⁷³ Darby recalled that:

More than once, even with ministers of the national church, we have broken bread on Monday evening after meetings for christian edification, where each was free to read, to speak, to pray, or to give out a hymn. Some months afterwards we began to do so on Sunday morning, making use of the same liberty, only adding the Lord's supper ...¹⁷⁴

However, Newton and Darby had not finally made up their minds to secede, and were apparently taken by surprise in January 1832 when the Lord's Supper was first publicly celebrated (apparently at Wigram's instigation); the clergy also stopped attending at this point.¹⁷⁵ Newton remained a Fellow of Exeter College until his marriage in March, and thus nominally must still have been an Anglican, but he recalled that his mother influenced them towards accepting this move (which implied

¹⁶⁶ Darby, *CW*, 15.34; cf. "Fry MS", 243; H.Groves, *Darbyism. Its Rise and Development, and a review of "the Bethesda question"*, 2.

¹⁶⁷ "Fry MS", 254-5.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 100, 255; Rowdon, *Origins*, 66, 74.

¹⁶⁹ J.H.Philpot (ed.), 1.165, 167 (Tiptaft to J.C.Philpot, 11th June and 27th July 1831); Rowdon, *Origins*, 69.

¹⁷⁰ H.Pickering, *Chief Men Among the Brethren*, 13.

¹⁷¹ [Darby], *Letters*, 3.357 [1855].

¹⁷² "Fry MS", 263; Rowdon, *Origins*, 74.

¹⁷³ Rowdon, *Origins*, 76.

¹⁷⁴ [Darby], *Letters*, 3.357 [1855].

¹⁷⁵ Embley, "Origins", 72; "Fry MS", 254, 256. Wigram had begun doing this privately every Sunday at Oxford, while still an Anglican (*Interesting Reminiscences*, 15).

that the group constituted a church), saying that there could be no blessing on those who did not go to church on a Sunday.¹⁷⁶

Controversy was not long in coming: Hall began to advocate the secret rapture, apparently in the sense taught by the *Morning Watch* (i.e. that not all believers would be raptured), and Wigram denounced it.¹⁷⁷ Hall insisted on making this doctrine a test of preachers at Plymouth, and Newton recalled: "I have heard Hall pray that the same gifts that were working in London might be given to them."¹⁷⁸ Newton must have been considerably discomfited, since he had left Oxford because of Bulteel's Irvingite extravagances.¹⁷⁹ For a while Hall's views seem to have carried the day, and Wigram left Plymouth for London.¹⁸⁰ However, Darby helped Newton sort things out and establish himself as presiding elder, whose function in meetings was to restrain the ungifted from participating.¹⁸¹ Hall was soon cured of his enthusiasm: breakfasting with Irving in London, he was told in no uncertain terms that he was wrong to have resigned from the Navy as he had, as he should have sought to serve Christ in the world.¹⁸²

In spite of this confusion, Darby's testimony was that in Plymouth, rather than in the meeting at Dublin in which he had been so involved, he had found his ideals realised: "Plymouth ... has altered the face of Christianity to me, from finding brethren, and they acting together."¹⁸³ The early history of the Plymouth group parallels that of the Dublin assembly, which was not originally set up as an alternative to existing churches, and that of the Limerick assembly.¹⁸⁴ Separation from other churches did not precede fellowship at the Lord's Table in the earliest days, and the original intention was not to form separate churches; here Darby did not, initially at least, follow Walker. However, a more negative note soon began to be heard.

A local curate, Henry Borlase, seceded because of the hopeless mixture of the world and the church in the establishment and the consequent impossibility of practising church discipline - a condition which he regarded as apostasy.¹⁸⁵ He produced two explanations of his actions: *Reasons for Withdrawing from the Ministry of the Church of England* (1833) and "Separation from Apostasy not Schism".¹⁸⁶ Bulteel's cousin

¹⁷⁶ "Fry MS", 255.

¹⁷⁷ Rowdon, *Origins*, 82, following "Fry MS", 250.

¹⁷⁸ "Fry MS", 252-3.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 238.

¹⁸¹ Coad, *History*, 63; "Fry MS", 301.

¹⁸² "Fry MS", 257.

¹⁸³ [Darby], *Letters*, 3.271 (13th April 1832); cf. Rowdon, *Origins*, 76.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Rowdon, *Origins*, 95-6.

¹⁸⁵ Coad, *History*, 64; cf. *CWit* 1 (1834): 339.

¹⁸⁶ *CWit* 1 (1834): 332-57.

J.L.Harris, curate of Plymstock since 1826, resigned his curacy in 1832, explaining his decision (based on concerns similar to Borlase's) in an *Address to parishioners of Plymstock* and more fully in *What is a Church? or Reasons for withdrawing from the Ministry of the Establishment*. Harris knew Newton and Wigram from Oxford¹⁸⁷, and soon became a leader at Plymouth.¹⁸⁸

The gap between Newton's views and Darby's was widening, particularly regarding prophetic issues.¹⁸⁹ Newton's opposition to anything resembling Irvingite teaching led him vehemently to oppose Darby's developing belief in a pre-Tribulation rapture.¹⁹⁰ From 15th September 1834, therefore, Newton convened a conference at Plymouth at the same time as the Irish meeting to consider the same questions¹⁹¹, a decision which to Darby later was proof of his isolationism¹⁹², although the advertisement described the meeting as being for those prevented from visiting Ireland.¹⁹³

Newton's growing isolationism was strengthened by the defection to Irvingism of Thomas Dowglass.¹⁹⁴ A local squire, he had been converted through Malan in Switzerland.¹⁹⁵ He began preaching in Salcombe, and was greatly respected by the Plymouth meeting, with whom his group had close links as they met along Brethren lines.¹⁹⁶ Newton and others went to preach for Dowglass and soon the group began to break bread - the first offshoot from Plymouth.¹⁹⁷ Dowglass was on the platform at Newton's 1834 conference.¹⁹⁸ However, within weeks he learned of the Irvingite work through his sister: after an interview with Irving he embraced it¹⁹⁹, and was advised to return to Devon and preach the universal love of God, for which he was allegedly "cast out" by the Brethren.²⁰⁰ Darby wrote to Dowglass using all the arguments at his disposal, but failed to reclaim him.²⁰¹ Newton sought to limit the

¹⁸⁷ Huebner, *Precious Truths*, 2.253.

¹⁸⁸ "Fry MS", 185; Reynolds, 170.

¹⁸⁹ "Fry MS", 238; cf. Huebner, *Precious Truths*, 1.42.

¹⁹⁰ Coad, *History*, 128.

¹⁹¹ "Fry MS", 267.

¹⁹² Darby, *CW*, 20.13-4.

¹⁹³ [B.W.Newton & H.Borlase], *Answers to the questions considered at a meeting held at Plymouth on September 15, 1834, and the following Days; chiefly compiled from Notes taken at the Meeting*, i.

¹⁹⁴ I have adopted the spelling 'Dowglass' although it is also given as 'Douglas', 'Douglass' or 'Dowglasse'.

¹⁹⁵ A.C.Smith, "J.N.Darby in Switzerland at the Crossroads of Brethren History and European Evangelism", *CBR* 34 (1983): 63.

¹⁹⁶ Rowdon, *Origins*, 77-8.

¹⁹⁷ "Fry MS", 142.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 267.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 142.

²⁰⁰ Copinger, "Annals", 46.

²⁰¹ Undated letter from Darby to Dowglass, in Christian Brethren Archive (CBA5540(406)).

damage, and his *Christian Witness* article on Irvingism in 1835 saved two-thirds of the Salcombe Brethren from defecting; Dowglass later became an Irvingite angel, and Newton described him as having become very worldly²⁰², a trait which would have made his views on prophecy highly suspect. Thus, through exposure to the pastoral problems resulting from the appearance of Irvingism, the die was cast for Newton's rejection of Darby's changing views concerning ministry as well as eschatology: having left Oxford because of mysticism in its Irvingite form, Newton was anxious to limit its influence elsewhere.

The Plymouth meeting became marked by an aggressive approach towards other churches, emphasising the call to separate from Babylon in the face of coming judgment. "Much of the teaching and testimony of the church was based on prophetic interpretation, and upon the apocalyptic expectations of apostasy and judgment which that study generated."²⁰³ This emphasis was to shipwreck the assembly. When Groves visited them in 1836, he concluded that they had shifted position from union in the truth to union in testimony against all other views²⁰⁴, as had Darby, whose adoption of narrower principles of fellowship probably coincided with his final separation from Anglicanism.²⁰⁵ On 10th March, Groves wrote a letter to Darby occasioned by the latter's treatment of Newman and Plymouth. In it he expressed his fear that Darby was returning to the sectarian position from which he had set out, by making doctrinal light rather than spiritual life the term of communion and by emphasising negatives (such as separation) rather than positives (such as unity and fellowship). Separation for Groves related to the believer's walk with God rather than his testimony to others, and he pointed out that when Darby had seceded (separating from much that was good for the sake of evil) he had lost much of his influence. Groves was convinced that Darby was being influenced by narrower minds.²⁰⁶

Newton appears to have ceased to act as presiding elder at Plymouth in 1835.²⁰⁷ He stated that at an unspecified point he was replaced by Harris, being no longer cordially supported by all.²⁰⁸ However, Tregelles stated that Newton laid down his office, no longer believing such appointments to be scriptural, and that Darby left Plymouth in 1836 because the standing of overseers was insufficiently recognised.²⁰⁹ Either way, in 1836 Newton was seriously ill, and his colleagues "said to me that they would

²⁰² "Fry MS", 142, 375.

²⁰³ Coad, *History*, 68.

²⁰⁴ Mrs.Groves, 342.

²⁰⁵ Embley, "Origins", 118-9.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Huebner, *Precious Truths*, 2.195. The text is given in Coad, *History*, 287-91.

²⁰⁷ Rev.J.Burnham, in conversation, 23rd September 1996.

²⁰⁸ "Fry MS", 301.

²⁰⁹ S.P.Tregelles, *Three Letters to the Author of "A Retrospect of Events that have taken place amongst the Brethren"*, 7n, 8.

undertake the visiting in the mornings & afternoons, so that I might live a little way out of Plymouth & there write. _ They said that I ought to write; that was what I was best capable of. So they arranged it."²¹⁰ Newton continued to exercise rigid control over affairs, and this was to be one of Darby's main charges against him in 1845.

2.2.4. Turmoil in Switzerland

Groves visited Switzerland early in 1835 seeking missionary recruits, and there is evidence to imply an early link between Swiss Brethren and Plymouth.²¹¹ Darby also visited Switzerland that year, and was invited to return late in 1837.²¹² Although things were becoming difficult at Plymouth, "It was in no way any particular opposition that led me to Switzerland in 1837, but a report of a brother who had been there, and stated that there were meetings like ours."²¹³

Darby arrived in Geneva on a scene of turmoil. Irvingism had targeted the city in Spring 1835 as a promising base, and late in 1836 two evangelists were sent: C.M.Carré and Pierre Méjanel.²¹⁴ A founder and former minister at Bourg de Four, and the Continental Society's first missionary, Méjanel had joined the Irvingites in 1830, and had been involved with the Scottish manifestations.²¹⁵ Through him, Drummond had invited another leader from Bourg de Four, Ami Bost, to spend three months in Britain late in 1835, hoping to convert him to Irvingism.²¹⁶ Through the evangelical theological school Irvingism had influenced the dissident movement in the canton of Vaud²¹⁷, but an attempted takeover of Bourg de Four failed after its pastors alerted their flock to Irvingism's history of false prophecies.²¹⁸ However, in Spring 1837 Drummond himself had returned to Geneva as an Irvingite apostle, accompanied by the prophet Taplin, who stayed until August.²¹⁹

Drummond and Haldane had assumed that the continental churches were sunk in doctrinal and spiritual decay, rejecting reports of recovery given by more optimistic

²¹⁰ "Fry MS", 305; cf. *BDEB*.

²¹¹ Smith, "British non-conformists", 106.

²¹² *BDEB*.

²¹³ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.625 (Memorandum of 1868). These meetings were probably part of the *Ancienne Dissidence*, which resulted from the Réveil (Smith, "British non-conformists", 104; idem, "Darby in Switzerland", 53, 65).

²¹⁴ Bost, 2.186; Copinger, "Annals", 75; S.Newman-Norton, "A Biographical Index of Those Associated with the Lord's Work", s.v. "Carré", "Méjanel".

²¹⁵ R.P.Evans, 68, 164; Smith, "Darby in Switzerland", 61-2; K.J.Stewart, 302; R.H.Story, *Memoir of the Life of the Rev. Robert Story*, 237-8.

²¹⁶ Smith, "Darby in Switzerland", 62; cf. Bost, 2.166.

²¹⁷ Bost, 2.187; Maury, 2.271.

²¹⁸ R.P.Evans, 164, citing Guers, *Le Premier Réveil*, 328; J.J.Herzog, *Les Frères de Plymouth et John Darby*, 2; Maury, 2.270, citing Guers, *Le Premier Réveil*, 329.

²¹⁹ Copinger, "Annals", 80-1.

visitors, regarding their own work as essential.²²⁰ Darby repeated their approach; he became involved in the Irvingite controversy at Bourg de Four, seeking to reconcile the parties concerned and using his idea of the church as ruined to this end.²²¹

Differences between Vaudois evangelicals regarding questions of church order and separation created a leadership vacuum²²², and he won their respect as a leader on his next visit from October 1839 by his handling of an outbreak of Wesleyan perfectionism.²²³ However, by the end of 1840 he had broken with the *Ancienne Dissidence*; he was blamed for a division which occurred at Bourg de Four on 3rd March 1842; and he was denounced at a conference called by the movement's leaders on 6th September to consider the question of the apostasy of the present dispensation.²²⁴ From that point Darby worked independently until his departure in June 1843, and on his next visit from June 1844 until February 1845.

In the background was Darby's expectation of the Second Coming in 1842.²²⁵ Smith has suggested that his writings before this were mainly on prophetic subjects, but that thereafter there was a shift in focus to ecclesiology: he believes that Darby's time in Switzerland brought about a reassessment of his priorities in ministry.²²⁶ However, we must not overestimate the importance of this period, nor the degree of the shift in focus; while it is true that Darby articulated his understanding of the church's ruin in the light of events in Switzerland, "Its roots are surely to be found in his earlier experience as much as in the Swiss situation."²²⁷

2.2.5. Tension and division: Darby, Newton and "Bethesda"

At the same time as Darby's personal ascendancy over many assemblies was increasing, he was retreating from belief in the need for elders (fearing the growth of a new clerical caste), and promulgating his doctrine of the church's ruin.²²⁸ In the light of this and the desire for unity of testimony, Newton's control of affairs at Plymouth could not have been more unwelcome. A growing church demanded strong leadership, which Newton sought to provide. Darby had initially encouraged him, but becoming more anti-clerical he became increasingly concerned.²²⁹ Both had apparently given up the idea that New Testament offices were still to be recognised, which left them without a given structure for church order, defined expectations of leaders or checks

²²⁰ K.J.Stewart, 167.

²²¹ Darby, *CW*, 4.188; Krapohl, 171.

²²² Smith, "British Nonconformists", 91, 96-7.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 114.

²²⁴ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.66-8 (21st January 1843); Smith, "Darby in Switzerland", 71-3.

²²⁵ Coad, *History*, 118; Smith, "Darby in Switzerland", 90n.

²²⁶ Smith, "British non-conformists", 171.

²²⁷ T.C.F.Stunt to the author, 6th October 1994.

²²⁸ Coad, *History*, 124-5.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 139.

upon them. The importance of personal relationships was thus all the greater in view of the lack of structures to hold things together. Both functioned virtually at will, and a collision was inevitable when they sought to lead and influence the same assembly.

Around 1840, Newton had circulated letters denouncing those differing from him on prophetic and dispensational matters; he isolated himself from other Brethren, deciding to walk "peacefully, but separately".²³⁰ Darby later alleged that those who taught an interpretation differing from Newton's were kept away from Plymouth²³¹, but at the time he sought to minimise the differences, though not without a sense of lurking evil: "If it were a foundation truth for the soul, no peace could be held with error: mistake in the interpretation of Revelation, one may exercise much patience with. These things are always the sign of some other evil; but God will turn it to good. Perhaps knowledge has been too much attended to at Plymouth."²³² However, disagreement caused both men to become entrenched in their positions and regard these differences as foundational.

In 1843, Newton published *Thoughts on the Apocalypse*: His fundamental divergence with Darby was over the church's relation to Israel, Newton believing that the church was a subject of prophecy, that certain events were to be expected before the Parousia, and rejecting Darby's understanding of the rapture and its separation from the Second Coming. Darby, for his part, held that Newton's views involved denial of the church's unique privileges.²³³ Revolution necessitated Darby's departure from Switzerland²³⁴, and he arrived in Plymouth in March 1845, expecting trouble but apparently not expected by Newton²³⁵, who recorded what happened:

*Mr. Darby had not been in Plymouth two days before he commenced on the gathering generally but principally on me, an attack of the most violent character you can well conceive. I soon became its chief object - chiefly on account of my "Thoughts on the Apocalypse" - The violence of the attack and its exceeding bitterness would be almost inconceivable by one who did not witness it ... Yet no discipline was employed._ No one said "Unless this ceases I must withdraw from you or bring it before the Church._ Private admonition was the utmost that was employed, and here I think was the first decided failure on the part of the brethren; and we are now suffering the results.*²³⁶

On 30th March Newton requested his fellow-elders Harris, Batten and Soltau to intervene against what he saw as unorthodox teaching, condemning Darby's actions as divisive.²³⁷ Soon after, Darby launched an attack which avoided doctrinal differences

²³⁰ Bass, 77; Neatby, 101.

²³¹ Darby, CW, 20.17-8.

²³² [Darby], *Letters*, 1.56 (3rd February 1841).

²³³ *Ibid.*, 3.282, cf. 284 (1844).

²³⁴ Smith, "Darby in Switzerland", 76.

²³⁵ Darby, CW, 20.20; "Fry MS", 331 (Memorandum of Newton).

²³⁶ "Fry MS", 356-7 (undated letter of Newton).

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 328-30.

and concentrated on Newton's weak spot - his high-handed attitude to others.²³⁸ Darby refused to make specific accusations, feeling that he need not give details of what had gone on publicly for six years, but charged Newton with sectarian exclusivism.²³⁹ The two then met before others, Newton vehemently asserting his desire for a clear testimony in Plymouth and the south-west against error.²⁴⁰ Harris withdrew from leadership, opposing Newton's sudden suspension of the Friday elders' meeting²⁴¹, an objection also raised by Darby because the meeting's suspension meant that pastoral matters were dealt with by Newton's immediate circle of supporters, thus denying him any means of influence.²⁴²

On 26th October Darby withdrew from communion, alleging that the principles of meeting were being subverted, evil was going unconfessed and unjudged, and the Friday meeting was set aside; thus evil could only be judged by two or three instead of the whole assembly, yet Newton denied the evil and kept other Brethren away from Plymouth - an action which amounted to denying the unity of Christ's body.²⁴³ Wigram supported Darby, convening prayer meetings on December 7th and 14th to which believers from the assembly in Ebrington Street were invited.²⁴⁴ On the 28th Darby set up another meeting, the Lord's Supper being observed in homes, thus implying that Ebrington Street was no longer a meeting according to Brethren principles.²⁴⁵

Darby published his version of events in September 1846, entitled *Narrative of the Facts, connected with the Separation of the Writer from the Congregation meeting in Ebrington Street*.²⁴⁶ His attack concentrated on the "system" which Newton had been seeking to inculcate. Characteristically, he viewed its reception as a complete entity as a mark of Satan's work, since the teacher was thereby set up as an authority between the individual and God.²⁴⁷ He charged that Newton refused to allow ordinary members to attend reading meetings as they would hear the authority of the teachers

²³⁸ Ibid., 333-4 (Darby to Newton); Neatby, 107-8.

²³⁹ "Fry MS", 337 (Newton to Darby); cf. Darby, *CW*, 20.28; Neatby, 110.

²⁴⁰ Darby, *CW*, 20.29-30.

²⁴¹ Embley, "Early Development", 231; "Fry MS", 344-5 (Harris to Newton, 8th October 1845).

²⁴² Rowdon, *Origins*, 243.

²⁴³ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.102-5 (12th November 1845), 108-11 (20th January 1846); idem, *CW*, 20.74; Embley, "Early Development", 232.

²⁴⁴ Lord Congleton, *Reasons for Leaving Rawstorne Street*, 14.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 9, 24; Darby, *CW*, 20.51-2.

²⁴⁶ Darby, *CW*, 20.1-72; cf. Huebner, *Precious Truths*, 2.12.

²⁴⁷ Darby, *CW*, 20.3.

questioned²⁴⁸, and dealt at length with the growth of clericalism at Plymouth and the stifling of open ministry.²⁴⁹

The basis for Newton's conduct had been laid years before at Oxford: his exclusivism, his passion for prophetic study, and his brushes with Irvingism. Longstanding discontent in the church surfaced with Darby's opposition to his autocracy.²⁵⁰ Newton himself later acknowledged that "in the question of ministry, the brethren at Plymouth were not Plymouth Brethren."²⁵¹ Darby's espousal of an "impulsive" concept of ministry, dependent on the Spirit's immediate inspiration, must have brought back memories of Bulteel's attempts to preach "in the power". However, Darby did not admit that his own views on ministry had changed: having approved of Newton's appointment as elder, he now held that a Spirit-led assembly would recognise God-given leaders without the need for formal appointment to office.²⁵²

Differing views regarding the issues at stake may have been rooted in differing understandings of religious truth: for Darby, it was the moral power of truth which had always weighed most upon him²⁵³, and he viewed Plymouth as a moral issue.²⁵⁴ Thus he emphasised what he saw as moral issues, whereas Newton was concerned to establish the facts. Since different procedures were felt to be appropriate depending on whether the disagreement was viewed in moral or factual terms²⁵⁵, it was impossible to resolve the conflict in a manner acceptable to both sides. It has also been suggested that Darby may have been seeking to discredit Newton on other grounds to short-circuit prophetic controversy, being embarrassed about the similarity between his view of the rapture and that of the Irvingites²⁵⁶; no clear evidence exists for this view, although Tregelles saw disagreement over prophecy as the root of the problem: "Had he [Newton] accorded with Mr. Darby on Prophecy, we should never have heard *his* voice raised against him as to Ministry or Church Order."²⁵⁷

In 1847 notes of an address by Newton were published in which he taught that some of Christ's sufferings were neither substitutionary nor personal but arose from his

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 20.13.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 20.22-3.

²⁵⁰ Coad, *History*, 143.

²⁵¹ "Fry MS", 301.

²⁵² Neatby, 108; Rowdon, *Origins*, 214.

²⁵³ F.W.Newman, 42-3. Darby wrote: "The question as to Christianity is not, if it be true (Mohammedanism is true), but if it be from God. The kinds of proof and their effects will be quite different." (CW, 6.341)

²⁵⁴ Darby, CW, 20.30; Rowdon, "A Nineteenth-Century Nestorius", VE 1 (1962): 71.

²⁵⁵ Cf. "Fry MS", 351-3 (Newton to Walker, Congleton, Moseley & Cookworthy, 28th November 1845).

²⁵⁶ Coad, *History*, 142; Rowdon, "Nestorius", 71-2.

²⁵⁷ Tregelles, *Three Letters*, 71. Huebner contends that such a view implies a failure to grasp the roots of Darby's ecclesiology (*Precious Truths*, 2.4).

identification with sinful man as a member of Israel under wrath, and were overcome by active obedience, whereas Darby held that Christ's active obedience was not part of his atoning work.²⁵⁸ A vigorous exchange of tracts followed in which Darby alleged that Newton got his doctrine from Satan in a manner analogous to the Irvingites.²⁵⁹ Newton issued a *Statement and Acknowledgement respecting certain Doctrinal Errors*²⁶⁰, admitting errors and withdrawing two tracts for "reconsideration"²⁶¹, but Darby rejected this as worthless, seeing Newton's orthodox expressions as there simply to hide his errors.²⁶² On 8th December 1847 Newton left Plymouth, and on 10th January 1848 Ebrington Street issued a statement disowning Newton's errors but affirming that they would continue to receive him if he visited Plymouth; Darby rejected this as still giving opportunity for Newton's doctrines to be deceitfully propagated.²⁶³

The dispute now entered its most damaging phase. "Bethesda", Bristol was a Baptist cause which which changed radically as George Müller and Henry Craik sought to realise their understanding of New Testament church life.²⁶⁴ Müller had begun ministering in a Baptist chapel at Teignmouth in Devon in January 1830, that summer commencing weekly observance of the Lord's Supper with opportunity for open ministry - before such things began at Plymouth, - and he and Craik moved to Bristol in May 1832 to minister at Bethesda. A major influence upon them was Robert Chapman (1803-1902)²⁶⁵; Chapman wrote very little but after spending some time in Evans' church in London, he exercised a long ministry at Barnstaple.²⁶⁶ Since Chapman (like Evans) was concerned to promote Christian unity, it seems likely that he influenced Bethesda away from the early narrowness of communion of which Darby had complained.²⁶⁷

Now, however, it was to be Darby who insisted upon narrowing communion, this time to exclude Newton's supporters, two of whom were admitted to communion at Bethesda in April 1848, after being cleared of holding his errors.²⁶⁸ Shortly after, Müller invited Darby to preach; Darby declined amicably, having a previous engagement, but later announced that he would never go to Bethesda again because it received followers of Newton. He demanded that it should corporately investigate and condemn Newton's

²⁵⁸ Coad, *History*, 147; Neatby, 130.

²⁵⁹ Coad, *History*, 148; Darby, *CW*, 15.109n; Neatby, 133-4.

²⁶⁰ The text appears in Coad, *History*, 292-6.

²⁶¹ Bass, 86; Coad, *History*, 148, 150; Neatby, 136.

²⁶² Neatby, 134-6.

²⁶³ Coad, *History*, 149; Neatby, 138-42.

²⁶⁴ For fuller details, see Rowdon, *Origins*, ch.5.

²⁶⁵ Coad, *History*, 70; Rowdon, *Origins*, 143.

²⁶⁶ Coad, *History*, 154.

²⁶⁷ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.10 (15th October 1832).

²⁶⁸ Coad, *History*, 157; Neatby, 157.

errors. Müller and Craik responded that they did not wish to be irreverent by making Christology the subject of controversy.²⁶⁹ In June, one of Darby's supporters seceded from Bethesda, giving the errors which could arise there as his reasons. Bethesda held a church meeting at which its leaders refused a corporate investigation and stated their desire to be aligned with neither party.²⁷⁰ On 26th August, Darby issued the "Bethesda Circular"²⁷¹, accusing them of "acting in the fullest and most decided way as the supporter of Mr. Newton, and the evil associated with him, and in the way in which the enemy of souls most desires it should be done."²⁷² Because the leaders refused a public investigation, Newton's errors could not be kept out of Bethesda.²⁷³ Darby urged meetings neither to receive to communion individuals from Bethesda, nor to receive individuals from meetings which welcomed individuals from there.²⁷⁴ Many, however, refused to excommunicate Bethesda, and a division between Open and Exclusive parties occurred.²⁷⁵

Until 1847 Bethesda had accepted those on both sides of the division at Plymouth; then they examined individuals for soundness, but now they would reject Newton's views publicly as a body. Darby's action in issuing the "Bethesda Circular" had given publicity to Newton's errors and, since he appeared to be repeating them, Bethesda were forced by circumstances to hold seven church meetings between 27th November and 11th December, as a result of which they decided not to receive anyone "defending, maintaining, or upholding" Newton's views or his tracts. Darby had got his wish, but Bethesda still refused to submit to his leadership. In July 1849 he called on Müller, declaring separation unnecessary in view of Bethesda's action and seeking renewed fellowship. Müller refused, considering that Darby's conduct in the whole affair required investigation. The breach was complete, and Darby left to enforce the separation.²⁷⁶

The 1850s and 1860s saw increasing centralisation in Exclusivism, though not without some setbacks. Articles by Darby in the *Bible Treasury* for 1858-9 appeared to express views on Christ's sufferings almost indistinguishable from Newton's: these were deemed binding by Exclusive leaders, although they had never been explicitly

²⁶⁹ Coad, *History*², 158; A.Miller, 49, 53.

²⁷⁰ Coad, *History*, 157; A.Miller, 49; Neatby, 158.

²⁷¹ Darby, *CW*, 15.164-7.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 15.164.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 15.165.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.166. When division occurred in his meetings in 1829, Walker stipulated that any member of the Dublin meeting who visited the London meeting must be examined to see whether he repented of the evils tolerated in Dublin (*Essays and Correspondence*, 2.31).

²⁷⁵ Coad, *History*, 159. Darby's account of the controversy appeared in *Letters*, 1.245-50 (6th October 1851).

²⁷⁶ A.Miller, 48-9, 53-5; Neatby, 173-6.

articulated in the New Testament - a position which Dorman²⁷⁷ felt amounted to accepting doctrinal development since the close of the canon. He felt that Darby's approach contradicted Exclusive insistence upon separation from the same error as promulgated by Newton, and withdrew²⁷⁸, describing Exclusivism as "an immense ecclesiastical ramification, which is everywhere subject, and in all things, as to its order, doctrine, and discipline, to Mr. D.'s decrees".²⁷⁹ So far had the movement come from its origins.

The allegation of doctrinal development was made again when a member from a meeting in London which had been disfellowshipped by the Central Meeting of leading brothers was received by an Exclusive meeting in Sheffield; the Rotherham meeting excommunicated Sheffield on 29th November 1863 for ignoring the discipline imposed in London. Darby commented that excommunication from one meeting put a person outside the whole church on earth, including all Exclusive meetings, because the church was one.²⁸⁰

In the clash between centralisation and independency we see the issue underlying the disagreement between Open and Exclusive Brethren: was the believer in his relations on earth primarily a member of a local gathering, or of Christ's universal body? Later Brethren history would appear to indicate that this was never satisfactorily resolved.

2.3. The evolution of an apostleship: the Catholic Apostolic Church

The history of the Catholic Apostolic Church in this period is largely that of three men: "Henry Drummond, who brought to it wealth and social standing, John Bate Cardale who brought to it organisation and legal caution, and Edward Irving who brought to it spiritual inspiration and publicity."²⁸¹ We have seen something of Drummond's personal story; now we turn to examine what happened under Irving and Cardale, as each symbolises a different aspect of the movement's development.

2.3.1. Coleridge, Irving and the emergence of apostles

Edward Irving was born in Annan on 4th August 1792. Graduating from the University of Edinburgh in 1809, he became a schoolteacher, studying divinity in order to be licensed as a preacher, the first step towards ordination in the Church of Scotland.

²⁷⁷ W.H.Dorman had resigned his position as an Independent minister in London during 1838 and joined the Brethren, explaining his reasons in *Principles of Truth; or, Reasons for Retiring from the Independent or Congregational Body, and from Islington Chapel*.

²⁷⁸ Neatby, 241-55.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 255.

²⁸⁰ [Darby], *Letters*, 2.257 (19th February 1864); Neatby, 223-6.

²⁸¹ R.S.Ward, 2.

Although he found it difficult to secure a post, he served as assistant to Thomas Chalmers at St. John's, Glasgow from 1819 to 1822, when he accepted a call to the Caledonian Chapel, Hatton Garden, London. Writing in April 1822 to one of the men who had invited him, Irving expressed a sense of isolation in his approach to ministry:

There is a sea of troubles, for my notions of a clergyman's office are not common, nor likely to be in everything approved. There is a restlessness in my mind after a state of life less customary, more enterprising, more heroical, if I might apply the word to a sacred use, certainly more apostolical. My notions of pulpit eloquence differ from many of my worthy brethren. In truth I am an adventurer on ground untried ...²⁸²

Unexpectedly, his ministry proved popular: the chapel was crammed with eager hearers, and a larger building was opened in Regent Square in 1827.

From 1823 to 1826 Irving was very friendly with Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Coleridge's influence has been neglected, yet his thought is crucial to understanding Irving's ecclesiology and apologetic.²⁸³ Irving shocked the evangelical world in 1825 by dedicating his first major ecclesiological work, *For Missionaries after the Apostolical School*, to Coleridge with the words: "you have been more profitable to my faith in orthodox doctrine, to my spiritual understanding of the Word of God, and to my right conception of the Christian Church, than any or all of the men with whom I have entertained friendship and conversation".²⁸⁴ Irving's opposition to anything which smacked of expediency in the fulfilment of the church's missionary commission echoed Coleridge's own opposition to expediency and his belief in the need for a return to first principles.²⁸⁵ Behind this lay something which was to appear among the Tractarians as well as the Irvingites and the Brethren, a belief in the church as a divine institution, not dependent on human will or earthly honour for its influence.²⁸⁶ Coleridge's approach to truth, viewing conscience as the chief witness of spiritual realities, and religious experience (rather than the rational 'evidences' which had been so popular in the previous century) as the foundation for Christian faith²⁸⁷, also reappeared in Catholic Apostolic thought. Irving was to continue Coleridge's opposition to rationalism and 'evidence theology', returning like his mentor (but unlike Chalmers) to the seventeenth century for his inspiration.²⁸⁸ Coleridge, however, could never appreciate Irving's interest in prophecy, and the friendship cooled.

²⁸² Irving to A. Robertson, April 1822, quoted by J. Hair, *Regent Square. Eighty Years of a London Congregation*, 34.

²⁸³ Bebbington, 80.

²⁸⁴ Irving, *For Missionaries after the Apostolical School*, vii-viii.

²⁸⁵ Reardon, 174.

²⁸⁶ Church, 105-6.

²⁸⁷ B. Willey, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 31-3.

²⁸⁸ Cf. Sandeen, 15-6.

It was A.J.Scott, who came to London in 1828 as Irving's assistant, who influenced him to believe that the spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 had not been permanently withdrawn from the church in this age, though Irving was little moved to seek them until he received news of the Scottish manifestations in 1830.²⁸⁹ Scott had preached from 1 Corinthians 12 on the subject of spiritual gifts in Greenock during 1829/30 and some, already influenced by McLeod Campbell's preaching on assurance and the universality of the atonement, began praying for the gifts to be restored. Among them was one Mary Campbell²⁹⁰: following Irving's reasoning, she concluded that "if Jesus as a man in my nature thus spake and thus performed mighty works by the Holy Ghost, which he even promiseth to me, then ought I in the same nature, by the same Spirit, to do likewise 'the works which he did, and greater works than these.'"²⁹¹ On 30th March 1830, she was the first to speak in tongues.²⁹² The curious and the critical flocked to the area, as did those who longed for the restoration of the church's primitive endowments. One visitor was J.B.Cardale, a young London lawyer who published his observations in the *Morning Watch*.²⁹³ His sister Emily recalled being "struck to hear these people, when in mighty power, praying to God to have pity upon his weary heritage ..., utter this petition: 'O Lord, send Apostles, in Thy compassion; none else can heal the schisms of Thy Church ...' ... we used to say, Apostles! what can it mean?"²⁹⁴

Cardale and others apparently testified at large meetings in London to what they had seen, and home meetings were formed to pray for the gifts.²⁹⁵ Irving was convinced that the gifts were genuine after attending a meeting at Cardale's house in October 1830, and the first manifestations in London occurred on 5th April 1831, when Mrs. Cardale spoke in power: "The Lord will speak to His people! The Lord hastens His coming! He comes, He comes."²⁹⁶ When their minister preached against the gifts, the Cardales sought shelter in Irving's church, becoming members in August 1832.²⁹⁷

Although Irving was now convinced that the gifts had been restored to the church, other matters (probably the Presbytery of London's investigation of his Christological writings) kept him occupied until May 1831.²⁹⁸ He had refused requests for prayer

289 E.Irving, "Narrative of Facts connected with the Recent Manifestations of Spiritual Gifts", *Fraser's Magazine*, January 1832, 756.

290 *Ibid.*, 755.

291 *Ibid.*, 757.

292 C.G.Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*, 66.

293 J.B.Cardale, "On the Extraordinary Manifestations at Port Glasgow", *MW* 2 (1830): 869-73.

294 E.Trimen, "The Rise and Progress of the Lord's Work", 17.

295 Rossteuscher, 231.

296 *Ibid.*, 237-8.

297 Trimmen, 24.

298 Rossteuscher, 232.

meetings for the gifts under church auspices²⁹⁹, but he then agreed to the commencement of prayer meetings for the approaching General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. On trial before the Presbytery of London, he recalled: "We cried unto the Lord for apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, anointed with the Holy Ghost the gift of Jesus, because we saw it written in God's word that these are the appointed ordinances for the edifying of the body of Jesus."³⁰⁰

The gifts first appeared in the Sunday services at Regent Square on 16th October 1831.³⁰¹ Uproar ensued and eventually the Trustees appealed to the Presbytery, before whom Irving went on trial from 26th April 1832. While he considered the question one of doctrine - were the gifts from God? - the Trustees considered it one of discipline - did such utterances contravene the Trust Deed's stipulation that worship was only to be conducted by those authorised by the Church of Scotland?³⁰² In spite of Irving's contention that such things were allowed for in the Church's First and Second Books of Discipline, judgment was given against him and his congregation were forced to find alternative accomodation.

Drummond also experienced opposition to the gifts. The break with his rector, McNeile, began because Drummond allowed laymen to pray at his home meetings.³⁰³ McNeile, who had preached in favour of the perpetuity of the gifts and at the final Albury Conference proposed investigating the Row manifestations, then preached against the gifts: encountering them first-hand at Irving's house, he still refused to recognise them as genuine.³⁰⁴ Drummond felt he had no option but to withdraw from McNeile's congregation, which he did in July 1832.³⁰⁵

One of those whose exercise of charismatic gifts had caused so much commotion was Robert Baxter, an Anglican lawyer from Doncaster, who was in occasional contact with Irving and his church between October 1831 and April 1832. There he was recognised as a greatly-gifted prophet; Irving took up themes from Baxter's utterances as sermon subjects³⁰⁶, and wrote: "The Lord has anointed Rob^t Baxter of Doncaster in a peculiar

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 233.

³⁰⁰ Strachan, *Irving*, 99, quoting W.Harding, *The Trial of the Rev. Edward Irving, M.A. before the London Presbytery*, 24. Significantly, the emphasis was already on offices rather than gifts.

³⁰¹ Baxter, *Irvingism*, 16-7.

³⁰² For details see Harding, *Trial before London Presbytery*.

³⁰³ R.S.Ward, 30.

³⁰⁴ H.Drummond, *Narrative*, 13-8.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 18. Drummond's *Narrative* may have been written in response to M'Neile's condemnation.

³⁰⁶ Baxter, *Irvingism*, 19-20. It has been suggested that Baxter drew inspiration for his prophecies from Calvin's *Institutes* (P.J.Roberts, "The pattern of initiation: sacrament and experience in the Catholic Apostolic Church and its implications for modern liturgical and theological debate", 42).



manner, I think apostolically."³⁰⁷ Baxter believed that he was called to be an apostle, expecting that after forty days' waiting God would manifest his call by endowing him with signs and wonders.³⁰⁸ Irving, he prophesied, was rejected from the apostolic office on account of the Church of Scotland's rejection of bishops as "the standing sign of the apostolic office"; instead, he was to be a prophet to his native land.³⁰⁹ Baxter also prophesied that the "spiritual apostles whom the Lord would now send forth" would be more mightily gifted than even the twelve.³¹⁰ When forty days passed and the promised endowments did not materialise, Baxter prophesied:

... that the power was not given on the fortieth day, because the church in London had failed in love towards the visible church, which God had cast off. ... that had the church in London manifested greater love, this baptism and power would have been given there; but now it should be given here. and on the day named, we should receive it, and thenceforward would the work proceed in swiftness and not again tarry.³¹¹

Still nothing happened: Baxter was assailed by doubts which culminated in his recantation, and which he alleged Irving shared.³¹² His defection just before Irving's trial caused a sensation which took years to die down; most critics drew heavily on his works, which recorded his inner experiences in detail.³¹³

In spite of this setback, it was not long before the first apostles were called. On 28th September 1832, after Irving had preached on the Ephesians 4 ministries, prophecy asked the congregation, "know ye not the Lord is waiting to bestow, but your unbelief hindereth."³¹⁴ Irving applied this to Baxter's defection:

When the dear brother for whom we prayed, and of whom the Lord hath said that we were the cause of his stumbling through our unbelief,- when he came amongst us I felt no manner of doubt, and do not at this moment feel any doubt, that he came commissioned of the Lord with an apostolic commission, and that he would have had the power of laying on of hands like an apostle. It was our unbelief that hindered, or the Lord long ere this, would have raised up apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.³¹⁵

³⁰⁷ Rossteuscher, 344. Darby recalled that Baxter was "once designated as their apostle" (CW, 15.23).

³⁰⁸ Baxter, *Narrative*, 66, 72.

³⁰⁹ Baxter, *Irvingism*, 69. However, Pusey alleged that prophecy had promised that Irving would be an apostle ("Irvingism", *OCP* no.6, June 1854, 99). Cardale did not contradict this in his influential reply, *Letter on Certain Statements Contained in Some Late Articles in "The Old Church Porch"*.

³¹⁰ Baxter, *Narrative*, 69-70.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 89-90. Notice the emphasis on love towards the existing church even though it had been declared apostate.

³¹² Baxter, *Irvingism*, 46.

³¹³ A typical rejoinder to Baxter's criticisms may be found in R.Norton, *The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets in the Catholic Apostolic Church* (1861), 78-90.

³¹⁴ Copinger, "Annals", 28.

³¹⁵ E.Irving, "... Exposition and Sermon ..., 28th September 1832", 2, in *Sermons by Irving and Armstrong*.

At a private prayer-meeting on 31st October, Drummond prophesied to Cardale "Convey the Holy Ghost for art thou not an Apostle?"; Taplin prophesied in similar vein a week later at Irving's house.³¹⁶ The movement's prayers were being answered.

The congregation in Albury began to develop along different lines from Irving's at Newman Street after Drummond's ordination as angel in December.³¹⁷ Irving believed that each represented the prototype of a different facet of God's work - Albury of the new type of spiritual congregation being created from nothing, and Newman Street of the renewal of existing churches. As he wrote to Drummond, "Yours is a spiritual plantation, ours is a transmutation from the sensual to the spiritual form of the heavenly life."³¹⁸ Drummond commented that the London group had first to be purged since it was not starting from nothing but was made up of believers coming out of the Babylon of apostate Christendom.³¹⁹

Other groups were also emerging, forced out of existing churches because of their belief in the gifts.³²⁰ As with the religious world's rejection of the conclusions of the Albury Conferences, this was not what those involved had hoped for. The time was one of flux, later seen as one of disorder, with erroneous interpretations of prophecies, feigned manifestations and human thoughts being mistaken for divine words.³²¹ It was said that there were no apostles or angels to discern, regulate and control the gifts, and nobody with experience who could help the gifted; it had yet to be learned that order was apostolic rather than prophetic in character.³²² Yet the pioneers were conscious of their lack, for one participant in the early prayer meetings recalled "hearing the cry in the Spirit, 'Send us apostles, - send us apostles.' The room used to ring with it."³²³

Irving's stormy relationship with the Church of Scotland concluded with his trial for heresy before the Presbytery of Annan on 13th March 1833. When the sentence of condemnation was pronounced, Irving's friend David Dow prophesied against the court before being silenced: Irving rose to follow him out with the words, "As many as will obey the Holy Ghost, let them depart!" - words which symbolised his developed

³¹⁶ Copinger, "Annals", 29. Irving had written to Baxter: "We much desire your re-appearing in the midst of us with the full power of an apostle to minister the Spirit unto us by the laying on of hands." (Irving to Baxter, 2nd March 1832, in Baxter, *Irvingism*, 22)

³¹⁷ R.S.Ward, 37.

³¹⁸ Irving to Drummond, 3rd February 1833, Northumberland Collection C9/12.

³¹⁹ H.Drummond, *Narrative*, 33.

³²⁰ Flegg, "Catholic Apostolic Church", 54.

³²¹ [T.Dowglass], *A Chronicle of Certain Events which have Taken Place in the Church of Christ, Principally in England, between the years 1826 and 1852*, 6-7.

³²² Norton, *Restoration* (1861), 30-1.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 25.

ecclesiology.³²⁴ A few weeks later, on 5th April, Taplin announced that God "purposed giving the mystery of the candlestick in the Holy Place": a new pattern for church order was about to be revealed.³²⁵ Irving was temporarily inhibited from exercising ministerial functions, in recognition of the Church of Scotland's action in deposing him, before being (re)ordained as angel by Cardale, prophecy indicating that as man had taken away fleshly ordinances God would give spiritual ones.³²⁶ His ordination was a crucial moment for the movement: no longer was it a network of individual congregations, but a unified body under the leadership of "universal" ministries - the apostles; this was the first use of apostolic authority to regulate the actions of a subordinate.³²⁷ On 1st May Taplin's prophecy was fulfilled when Cardale dictated "in the power" a letter setting out local church order, *The Mystery of the Golden Candlestick*.³²⁸

Irving continued to welcome the exercise of prophetic gifts; Rossteuscher described him as "always full of confidence whenever he could rest upon a word of prophecy"³²⁹ while Baxter commented that "all the changes which took place in Mr. Irving's views and church arrangements, were in subservience and strict obedience to these utterances."³³⁰ However, his meek submission to the prophets stands in stark contrast to his uneasy relationship with the apostles. The appearance of apostles and the consequent changes in his church's structure caught him off-balance, and he found it hard to adjust.³³¹ Concerning his relationship with Cardale, he wrote: "I receive my instructions through the Apostle, but when he has delivered them to me, he must be the 1st to observe them, and I shall take care that he does so."³³² Later writers saw his error as continuing to judge and act on prophecy given in his church and regulate proceedings accordingly, instead of transmitting such words to the apostles for them to provide a universally-applicable interpretation: this was viewed as potentially schismatic.³³³ In his last two letters to his flock, Irving confessed to having been impatient with apostolic government³³⁴, and on 7th December 1834 "he sent for Mr. Woodhouse saying that he wished to confess his sins in resisting the bringing out of the

³²⁴ [W.Harding]?, *The Trial of the Rev. Edward Irving, A.M. before the Presbytery of Annan, on Wednesday March 13, 1833*, 26.

³²⁵ Copinger, "Annals", 33.

³²⁶ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 20; cf. W.W.Andrews, *Irving*, 143.

³²⁷ J.Lancaster, "John Bate Cardale, pillar of apostles: a quest for catholicity", 55.

³²⁸ Copinger, "Annals", 35.

³²⁹ Rossteuscher, 508.

³³⁰ Baxter, *Irvingism*, 10.

³³¹ Pusey suggested that, like Dr. Frankenstein, Irving was overpowered by his own creation ("Irvingism", *OCP* no.6, June 1854, 99).

³³² Rossteuscher, 487.

³³³ [C.W.Boase], *Supplementary Narrative to The Elijah Ministry*, 811; [Dowglass], *Chronicle*, 18.

³³⁴ W.Wilks, *Edward Irving: an Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography*, 282.

Apostleship, and his jealousy of those who were his children, lest they should lead the flock astray. Having received absolution, he almost immediately passed away."³³⁵

2.3.2. *The parting of the ways: Port-Glasgow rejects the London apostles*

Late in 1834 or early in 1835, the angel was shown to be over the prophet in the local church, with the responsibility of instructing, discerning evil spirits, and controlling the gifts, thus enabling those gifted to discern their own state.³³⁶ In the universal church, it was asserted that apostles were superior to prophets, which led to the London movement's rejection by the Port-Glasgow group. The significance of this divergence for the movement's history has been neglected, yet Darby referred to it in 1834³³⁷, which implies that it was common knowledge. It has been viewed as the result of a clash between apostolic autocracy and prophetic anarchy³³⁸, but Catholic Apostolic writers tended to view it as arising from national callings, Scotland being seen as the cradle of prophecy and England of apostleship³³⁹, or Scotland as emphasising life, and England form.³⁴⁰

The Macdonald family were among those stirred by Scott to seek the gifts.³⁴¹ Opposition led them to meet apart from the Church of Scotland, viewing existing ordinations as merely human and external, waiting for God to substitute a new order of ministry, holding prayer meetings and celebrating the Lord's Supper.³⁴² Disorder was frequent because they would not place any restrictions on those prophesying in their meetings.³⁴³ Urged to go to London, where they would have been provided for, they refused, not feeling called by God to do so.³⁴⁴ Indeed, they came to reject the London apostles after seeing how one prophet, Jane Simpson, had been cast out by Irving, under the influence of other gifted persons.³⁴⁵

³³⁵ Copinger, "Annals", 50.

³³⁶ E.Miller, *Irvingism*, 1.151.

³³⁷ [Darby], "Newman Street Teachers", 173. The only modern researchers to give much attention to it are C.G.Strachan ("Lack of Discernment in the Regent Square Group", a paper given at Regent Square United Reformed Church, London, 26th September 1992) and N.R.Needham (*Thomas Erskine of Linlathen: his life and theology, 1788- 1837, 389-90*).

³³⁸ R.S.Ward, 45.

³³⁹ Irving, "An Interpretation of the fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse", *MW* 6 (1832): 271; Rossteuscher, 467-8.

³⁴⁰ J.S.Davenport, *The True Apostolical succession. A letter to the Revd. Francis Vinton, D.D., occasioned by his sermon preached at the institution of the Rev. T.M.Bishop as Rector of Grace Church, Albany, Jan.14, 1858 ...*, 16.

³⁴¹ A.L.Drummond, *Irving*, 138.

³⁴² R.Norton, *Memoirs of James and George Macdonald, of Port-Glasgow*, 179.

³⁴³ Copinger, "Annals", 31.

³⁴⁴ E.Miller, *Irvingism*, 1.58.

³⁴⁵ Strachan, "Lack".

The lay theologian Thomas Erskine was friendly with McLeod Campbell and Irving and in contact with the Macdonalds, and was initially sympathetic to the possibility of the gifts being restored. However, the London group's increasing ecclesiasticism alienated Erskine and Campbell from Irving.³⁴⁶ Erskine opposed their authoritarianism and later rejected the gifts also, considering (like the Brethren) that emphasis on the church's role in discernment dictated to the individual conscience and undermined personal religion.³⁴⁷

Robert Norton, a doctor who married Margaret Macdonald in 1832³⁴⁸, expressed in 1839 the opinion that it was the introduction of apostleship and the subordination of prophecy to it which were the main points at issue between the groups:

That, however, which, above all other things, appears to have quenched and grieved away the Spirit of prophecy from the Irvingite church, was the rising up among the other members of the church, of men assuming the apostleship, and, by making the voice of the prophets subordinate to their superior office, gradually suppressing it. In this way the church gradually became remodelled upon quite another basis, and with quite another constitution; so that in reality it is not, and has scarcely even the least appearance of being, the same church, as it was originally. The avowed basis of the present constitution of the Irvingite church, is the reality of the apostolic office and authority among them.³⁴⁹

This opposition to the London group's developing emphasis on structures and authority reflected the thought of A.J.Scott, who considered internal life more important than external structures.³⁵⁰ The Port-Glasgow group had prayed for apostles, but George Macdonald concluded that apostleship was a snare of Satan.³⁵¹ Prophecy among them supported this, as Erskine recorded: "I have since heard from James Macdonald, Port-Glasgow, that the spirit amongst them had testified against the London mission, saying that "they were deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.""³⁵²

On the other hand, the apostles' estimate of the Port-Glasgow group was that:

³⁴⁶ Needham, 303.

³⁴⁷ Erskine to Lady Elgin, 18th March 1834, in W.Hanna, ed., *Letters of Thomas Erskine*, 155; Needham, 380-1; cf. Hargrove, *Reasons for Retiring*, xxv; Newton, *Occasional Papers*, 188.

³⁴⁸ K.Born, "The Lord's Work under Apostles", 15. Norton came to doubt the gifts for a period, but joined the Catholic Apostolics in 1854.

³⁴⁹ R.Norton, *Neglected and Controverted Scripture Truths; with an historical review of Miraculous manifestations in the Church of Christ; and an account of their late revival in the west of Scotland*, 375-6.

³⁵⁰ A.J.Scott, "Answer to the question, what was the Reformation?", *MW* 1 (1829): 640; cf. J.P.Newell, "A.J.Scott and his circle", 170.

³⁵¹ Norton, *Memoir*, 211.

³⁵² Erskine to Miss Rachel Erskine, 11th April 1834, in Hanna, ed., *Letters of Erskine*, 160. Darby linked the Macdonalds' rejection of the London apostles with their rejection of Irving's Christology (*CW*, 6.285).

They prophesied of the ordinances which God has since revived; and because these ordinances appeared first in London, and did not spring up among themselves, and did not assume the form they had imagined, they rejected them. They would interpret their own words; they understood them in an uncatholic, hasty, and literal manner. They measured the depths of God by the reason of man; and so they missed the mark.³⁵³

It was also alleged that they rejected the subjection of gifted persons to rulers in the church.³⁵⁴ According to Irving, they sought to possess the Spirit as individuals instead of as members of a body, placing too much confidence in their own discernment, "every man his own Church, which is every man usurping to be Head of the Church."³⁵⁵ This tension between the individual's walk with God and the church's role in regulating gifts would surface again in the "Crisis" of 1840.

2.3.3. Cardale and the consolidation of apostolic authority

The apostles experienced a series of crises affecting their leadership, each resulting in a strengthening of their control of the movement. The first involved their securing acceptance as genuine apostles and gaining control of the work in Scotland as well as England. The second, during 1840, settled the nature of their relationship with the prophets and the other ministries. The third, resolved with the introduction of the rite of sealing in 1847, concerned the nature of the spiritual grace conveyed through apostles. The fourth, around 1860, was precipitated by the prophets, and ensured that no replacements would be appointed for apostles who had died, thus securing the movement's eschatological orientation and provisional nature. Each crisis except the third resulted in official teaching being circulated concerning the nature, place and limits of prophecy, although tensions continued to be felt.³⁵⁶ We shall consider these episodes in turn.

Drummond had been the second apostle to be called; four others followed at intervals, then prophecy after Irving's death directed Cardale and Taplin to visit the churches seeking six more.³⁵⁷ There was a setback when one, David Dow, refused his call; Dow had set himself up as an apostle in 1832-3, causing havoc in southern Scotland before concluding that he had been deluded. According to Rossteuscher:

... the Apostles and other chief ministers in London had already received the knowledge that the Lord really revealed himself to this man and had chosen him to be an Apostle. It was because he had misused the power of the spirit for his own

³⁵³ T.Carlyle, *A Short History of the Apostolic Work*, 10.

³⁵⁴ [C.W.Boase], 772.

³⁵⁵ Irving to Drummond, 2nd April 1834, Northumberland Collection, C9/36.

³⁵⁶ For examples of how the chaos created by prophecy was handled, see T.G.Grass, "The Taming of the Prophets: bringing prophecy under control in the Catholic Apostolic Church", *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* (forthcoming).

³⁵⁷ F.V.Woodhouse, "Address to the Seven Churches in London: On the Death of Mr. Cardale", 2; [idem], *Narrative*, 39.

exaltation, taking an unauthorized place in a congregation and that not in fellowship with but rather in antagonism to the churches in England because he hastily went before the Lord, he had fallen under the power of the adversary.³⁵⁸

After a replacement was chosen, the twelve were "separated" to (or freed to undertake)³⁵⁹ their work on 14th July 1835, by the angels of the Seven Churches in London.³⁶⁰ Their role was initially unclear; their first act (in obedience to prophecy) was to spend a year in seclusion at Albury, setting up the perfect pattern of worship and establishing a weekly celebration of the Eucharist.³⁶¹ Here they studied the Scriptures in a similar way to the prophetic conferences³⁶², focusing on the Tabernacle's typical significance and hammering out an agreed interpretation in the light of prophecy.

In addition, the apostles:

... prepared, in the light of prophecy, a testimony to the bishops of the Church of England. Each of the apostles expressed his mind in writing regarding the ecclesiastical and political condition in England. These writings were then given to the Pillar of Apostles, Mr Cardale, who, with the grace and wisdom given to him, combined them together into one testimony. Early in 1836 this testimony was delivered to the English bishops by Mr Drummond ...³⁶³

This was the first instance of what became an important *genre* in Catholic Apostolic literature, whose origins may have been in Baxter's desire to deliver a prophetic testimony to William IV and the Queen.³⁶⁴ The Testimonies reflected a hierarchical concept of social order, being sent to the rulers in church and state on the principle that God dealt "with the heads through the heads"; rulers were held responsible before God for their subjects' condition.³⁶⁵ All Testimonies followed a similar pattern: extensive consideration of contemporary evils in church and state, exposition of Biblical teaching concerning God's purpose for mankind and the church, assertion that through the events culminating in the restoration of apostles God's purpose was finally

³⁵⁸ Rossteucher, 483.

³⁵⁹ Woodhouse described it as "an act of separating men from their places in the churches that they might be for the use of the whole Church" ("Address on the Death of Cardale", 3). See Appendix 2 for details of the apostles.

³⁶⁰ Baxter had prophesied concerning a period of 1260 days to terminate on this date, which he interpreted as referring to the translation of believers to heaven before the Great Tribulation and the Second Coming, but which the movement interpreted as referring to the separation of the apostles (Baxter, *Irvingism*, 19-20, 23; Shaw, 41).

³⁶¹ Woodhouse, "Address on the Death of Cardale", 3.

³⁶² Compare L. Albrecht, *The Work by Apostles at the end of the Dispensation*, 10-1, with Irving, *Preliminary Discourse*, 201-2.

³⁶³ Albrecht, 11; Copinger, "Annals", 65; extracts in E. Miller, *Irvingism*, 2.371-80.

³⁶⁴ Rossteucher, 353.

³⁶⁵ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 61; cf. [J.B. Cardale], *Notes of Lectures delivered in the Seven Churches in London in the months of October, November, and December 1860*, 44.

being realised, and an urgent appeal to accept the work and so find shelter from coming judgment.

Based on the first testimony, another was prepared by Drummond or Perceval for presentation in 1836 to William IV and the Privy Council.³⁶⁶ A third (the "Great Testimony") was prepared in the same manner during the summer of 1837, mainly by Cardale, for "the spiritual and national heads of Christendom", and delivered in 1838.³⁶⁷ Albrecht spoke for the movement in describing this as "the most important document that has appeared in the Church since the close of the New Testament Canon."³⁶⁸ The "Great Testimony" functioned as a rule according to which those sent forth to Christendom were to speak³⁶⁹, and was reissued on several occasions.

At a meeting in the summer of 1836 of the Council of Zion (the movement's governing assembly), Drummond prophesied that they were to divide Christendom (their mission-field) into twelve tribes, from which the first-fruits of the elect were to be gathered.³⁷⁰ The apostles (except Cardale, Tudor, and Armstrong, who were directed to remain at Albury³⁷¹) set out to visit their tribes during 1837 and 1838 as private individuals. They were instructed to "gather gold", examining the doctrines, worship and customs of Christendom's divisions and noting what was good; this was to be combined to produce a truly catholic way of worship, ensuring that everything of value escaped the coming judgment upon the apostate church. Though each church had but a partial understanding of the truth (which made reconciliation between them impossible), each had something to contribute to a restored and united body, whether in doctrinal understanding or liturgical practice.³⁷²

On their return at Christmas 1838, the apostles established the outlines of the fourfold ministry of apostle, prophet, evangelist and pastor found in Ephesians 4.11: this had its roots in prophetic interpretation of Biblical typology, light having been

³⁶⁶ R.A.Davenport, 112; Rossteuscher, 586; extracts in E.Miller, *Irvingism*, 2.361-70. Drafts exist among the Perceval Papers (British Library, Additional MS 49192). Four apostles were legally trained (Cardale, Carlyle, Perceval and Woodhouse), and the delivery of the Testimonies is reminiscent of the serving of legal documents (cf. E.Miller, *Irvingism*, 1.178).

The Mormons adopted a similar approach, an emissary taking an open letter to Queen Victoria detailing the signs of the times and the political destiny of the world, and calling all to join them as God's restored church (W.H.Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists: The Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790s to the 1840s*, 233-4).

³⁶⁷ Albrecht, 12; cf. Copinger, "Annals", 81; Rossteuscher, 598, 608; [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 55. An abridged version appears in E.Miller, *Irvingism*, 1.347-437.

³⁶⁸ Albrecht, 12; cf. Rossteuscher, 598.

³⁶⁹ [C.W.Boase], 829; H.Drummond, *Discourses on the True Definition of the Church, One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic, and kindred subjects*, 137.

³⁷⁰ Rossteuscher, 590.

³⁷¹ Copinger, "Annals", 82; Rossteuscher, 597.

³⁷² [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 57-60.

given on the mystery of the four cherubim in Ezekiel 1.³⁷³ Their preparation was now complete, and it was time for their catholic work to begin.³⁷⁴

However, before they could minister to Christendom's schisms, they had to face a crisis in their own movement. Continuing lack of clarity concerning the role of apostles and their lengthy absence from the young church precipitated a crisis centred on the nature of apostolic rule, and in particular the relation of apostles to the other ministries.³⁷⁵ Were the apostles merely the executors of the will of the Council of Zion which had separated them, or did they possess independent authority? Later writers considered that many in the movement had misunderstood the typology of Ezekiel 1³⁷⁶: who, then, was the final interpreter of prophecy?³⁷⁷

The emerging church owed a doctrinal debt to the prophets; before 1832 prophecy had spoken of God's universal love, assurance as of the essence of faith, the need for personal holiness, Christ's personal return and the millennium, Christendom's identification as Babylon, the outpouring of the Spirit in preparation for the Second Coming, the restoration of charismatic gifts, the Tabernacle as foreshadowing the body of Christ, and the need for rebuilding the church.³⁷⁸ However, increasing tension had been felt: on 26th March 1835 Tudor had written to Perceval:

I believe the Prophets (the most precious gift to the church as the means of opening all the rest) most of all need both counsel and rule, and least of all are able to bear it. The very circumstance of their being set for bringing in ordinances and for regulating ordinances always lays them open to the temptation of thinking themselves above all ordinances. And as the prophets have been frequently taken from the humbler walks of life (to spoil the pride of man) these have the further temptation of despising the distinctions of rank as well as the ordinances of the church.³⁷⁹

It seems evident, bearing in mind the social background of many of the apostles, that difference in social class was a factor in their strained relationships with the prophets (and possibly in Irving's relationships with the apostles).³⁸⁰ But this was not the only factor: in Drummond's words, "the besetting sin of a prophet is impatience of rule or control".³⁸¹ After their year in retreat, it seems as though the apostles felt themselves saddled with an order of ministry which they needed in order to legitimate

³⁷³ Albrecht, 15, 19; Carlyle, *Short History*, 15; [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 66-77. Appendix 1 provides a chart of Catholic Apostolic ministries.

³⁷⁴ Rossteuscher, 615.

³⁷⁵ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 83.

³⁷⁶ Albrecht, 20; [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 83.

³⁷⁷ Flegg, "Catholic Apostolic Church", 70.

³⁷⁸ [C.W.Boase], 789-90.

³⁷⁹ Perceval Papers, British Library Additional MS 49192, 68/14.

³⁸⁰ Cf. D.Tierney, "The Catholic Apostolic Church: a study in Tory millenarianism", *Historical Research* 63 (1990): 300.

³⁸¹ "Notes on gifted persons", Northumberland Collection C13/1a.

their own position, and which they could not disown without undercutting that, but whose unpredictable manifestations were increasingly unwelcome unless strictly domesticated.

While expectations concerning the success of the apostles' missions had not been realised, the prophets were a potent force in the movement's life, and the idea of government by council had strong historical support.³⁸² The prophets (who had played a crucial role in the emergence of the apostolate) were unhappy, for their ministry had arisen first but was now being devalued.³⁸³ No longer did apostles wait for a sense of the Spirit's leading through prophecy before fulfilling the duties of their office. Irving had warned Drummond "*qua* Apostles, you should neither write nor speak but by the Holy Ghost. ... the *mind* of the apostle is no ordinance within the Lord's house."³⁸⁴ Now, however, the apostles believed that their gift, while involving spontaneous Spirit-led action, was activated by the intelligence, in contrast to the impulse which activated the prophetic gift.³⁸⁵ It seems that in their estimate of the prophets the apostles were out of touch with what was going on, and failing to give the leadership necessary: Stevenson contrasts the angels' concern with local church affairs with the apostles' concern to rebuild the universal church.³⁸⁶

The apostles invited comments on the situation from ministers and conferred privately. In a declaration dated 4th August 1840, delivered by Cardale, they expressed their willingness to serve the churches or to be set aside, but warned that they could only serve on the terms they had set out.³⁸⁷ The subordination of the prophets was clearly asserted, as was the apostles' freedom to act without waiting for supernatural impulse and their authority as interpreters of prophetic light on Scripture. For the first and only time, the apostles were acting independently of all other ministries.³⁸⁸ It was to cost them dearly: Mackenzie agreed to the drawing up of the declaration but then felt unable to sign it and withdrew, considering that he had no right to act as an apostle without the Spirit's direct leading and promised supernatural endowments. Thus "it became necessary to transmit the document, not as a perfect and authoritative word of the Apostles, but as an expression of the sentiments of the eleven".³⁸⁹ Their actions could never be anything other than provisional thereafter. They briefly suspended activity in hope of Mackenzie's return, but to no avail.³⁹⁰ The Council was disbanded,

³⁸² E. Miller, *Irvingism*, 1.207-8; R.S. Ward, 57.

³⁸³ Flegg, "Catholic Apostolic Church", 70.

³⁸⁴ Irving to Drummond, October 21st 1833, Northumberland Collection C9/27.

³⁸⁵ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 34-5.

³⁸⁶ K.W. Stevenson, "The Catholic Apostolic Eucharist", 23.

³⁸⁷ Copinger, "Annals", 86; [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 84. Excerpts appear in F.V. Woodhouse, "Teaching on the Prophetic Office, delivered at Albury on Whit Monday, 1867", 5.

³⁸⁸ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 86-7.

³⁸⁹ [Dowglass], *Chronicle*, 28.

³⁹⁰ Copinger, "Annals", 87.

and prophecy was temporarily restricted: ministers were forbidden to act on prophetic words, prophecy among the apostles supporting this.³⁹¹ Prophecy was said to be dependent on the individual's cleanness, which the apostles were to discern.³⁹²

According to Ward, Cardale "shewed a singular ability for exercising power while remaining concealed in the background."³⁹³ The outcome of this crisis consolidated Cardale's position as the movement's leader, yet just at this time he occupied himself in producing a comprehensive Liturgy. Between 1844 and 1847 he largely withdrew from apostolic work, leaving Tudor and King-Church in charge.³⁹⁴ The apostles had gone abroad to their tribes in 1844, but were recalled late in 1845 because of tensions over liturgical and ceremonial matters between those who were eager to move in a "higher" direction and those, probably from non-episcopal backgrounds, who wished to proceed more cautiously.³⁹⁵ While the apostles adopted a mediating position, unanimity was not always achieved: at times, Cardale as "Pillar of Apostles" felt it necessary to impose his will on the others.³⁹⁶ It seems probable that the teachings which formed his *Readings upon the Liturgy* were first delivered in response to tensions over liturgical matters and the movement's need for a clear lead. There were complaints that he was imperious in his exercise of authority, but his fairness and tact ensured that no schism took place.³⁹⁷

However, there was a loss of cohesion among the apostolate, and Copinger considered it noteworthy that a meeting of the apostles on 12th January 1846 which discussed liturgical developments was marked by "great divergencies of opinion and want of mutual confidence".³⁹⁸ Dalton had withdrawn from them for reasons known only to himself; he returned to Anglican ministry, attending only one meeting of the apostles (in 1853) until resuming his place in 1860.³⁹⁹ Drummond also withdrew somewhat, expressing his disillusionment in a circular on "foreign work" (work among Christians of other persuasions⁴⁰⁰). Exasperatedly, he stated that although he drew this up at the apostles' request, as usual nothing was done with it.⁴⁰¹ Not surprisingly, in view of his early interests, he considered the movement's near-total

³⁹¹ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 85; cf. Flegg, "Catholic Apostolic Church", 72.

³⁹² E. Miller, *Irvingism*, 1.212-3.

³⁹³ R.S. Ward, 10.

³⁹⁴ "Miller's notes to his own work" (on 1.241).

³⁹⁵ R.A. Davenport, 127. There was a concern that opposition to the use of vestments and new liturgical forms could encourage opposition to apostolic authority (Born, 65).

³⁹⁶ Copinger, "Annals", 93-4.

³⁹⁷ R.S. Ward, 11.

³⁹⁸ Copinger, "Annals", 93-4, quoting the coadjutor Dr. Isaac Capadose (1834-1920).

³⁹⁹ For a time he served under the Tractarian W.F. Hook at Leeds (Copinger, "Annals", 92).

⁴⁰⁰ R.A. Davenport, 130.

⁴⁰¹ H. Drummond, [circular on "foreign work" of 10th February 1847], 3.

lack of missionary zeal remarkable.⁴⁰² Indeed, although he is thought to have been influential in its preoccupation with ritual⁴⁰³, he wrote "... I am heartily ashamed of the way in which the last ten years of my life have been drivelled away."⁴⁰⁴ Later in 1847 he was invited to return to Parliament.⁴⁰⁵ He later exposed the deficiencies of a Testimony-based approach to mission: "the formal delivery of a copy of the Testimony to an idiot Emperor and a superannuated Pope, can never be honestly held to be a fair dealing with them."⁴⁰⁶ Drummond's sense of frustration was shared by many; Woodhouse records a widespread feeling of deadness and lack of spiritual vitality and progress, even amongst devoted members, reported by the angels to Cardale early that year in the hope that the apostles would have a remedy.⁴⁰⁷

Doubtless the apparent delay of the Second Advent played a part in producing this state of affairs, and the remedy was intended to hasten the great day. It turned out to have its origins in the words used at Cardale's call as apostle (if not earlier, in Scott's distinction between regeneration and baptism with the Holy Ghost and Baxter's prophecies), and to have been foreshadowed by prophecy late in 1835 which declared that apostles should lay hands on those reaching the age of twenty.⁴⁰⁸ It was the sealing with the Spirit, ministered by apostles, acceptance of which implied acceptance of the apostles' authority, thus consolidating their role as the movement's leaders.⁴⁰⁹ Those sealed would form part of the 144,000 of Revelation 7, who would escape the Great Tribulation as the firstfruits of the redeemed.⁴¹⁰ The introduction of this rite had a salutary effect on the membership, and between 1846 and 1851 communicants increased by a third.⁴¹¹ Furthermore, oral tradition has it that reconciliation between apostles and angels came about in 1847 after the angel at Newman Street adjourned the Eucharist on hearing Matthew 5.20-26 read, with its call to reconciliation, and went immediately to see Cardale at Albury.⁴¹²

The fourth crisis resulted in a major schism, later known as the New Apostolic Church: it began when the first deaths among the apostles occurred in 1855, stunning the congregations and their surviving colleagues. At the Assembly of the Seven Churches on 30th January, Cardale admitted that he had expected that all the apostles who

⁴⁰² Ibid., 19.

⁴⁰³ Edwards, 3.169; cf. H.Drummond, *Principles of Ecclesiastical Buildings and Ornaments*.

⁴⁰⁴ H.Drummond, ["foreign work"], 26.

⁴⁰⁵ R.S.Ward, 3.

⁴⁰⁶ [H.Drummond], *Remarks on the Ministry of Instruction in the Church*, 23.

⁴⁰⁷ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 118.

⁴⁰⁸ Copinger, "Annals", 65.

⁴⁰⁹ Flegg, "Catholic Apostolic Church", 78, cf. *Apostles' Reports 1853*, 4.

⁴¹⁰ E.Miller, *Irvingism*, 1.248-53.

⁴¹¹ Copinger, "Annals", 106.

⁴¹² Stevenson, "Catholic Apostolic Eucharist", 25.

remained faithful would survive until Christ's return.⁴¹³ Six met at Albury that July, and issued a summary of their conclusions, denying that there was any scriptural warrant for replacing apostles who died.⁴¹⁴ However, the desire for replacements was not thereby quenched: on 17th July 1859, when C.J.T.Böhm was preaching at Albury, Taplin prophesied that Böhm was sent as "an apostle of the Lord". Although this was originally taken to mean that he would replace a dead apostle, the apostles interpreted it as a call to coadjutorship.⁴¹⁵ In May 1860 the prophet H.Geyer called Böhm and W.R.Caird as apostles; although both were appointed coadjutors, Geyer claimed that each had initially accepted the validity of their calling as apostles, and that they had been leant on by the assembled company.⁴¹⁶ Finally, in 1861 Geyer and Woodhouse were in Königsberg in northern Germany: Geyer called an elder there (Rosochacki) as an apostle, taking the call of Paul and Barnabas without reference to the Jerusalem apostles as his precedent for so doing. Rosochacki took office in Hamburg in 1863, though he soon recanted, and Geyer was excommunicated by Woodhouse in Berlin. Schwartz, Geyer's angel in Hamburg, seceded with almost all his large congregation after Woodhouse wrote informing them that they were no longer part of the Catholic Apostolic Church.⁴¹⁷

In spite of the difficulties through which it had passed, the movement was by no means spent. There was a widespread expectation that the Second Advent would occur in 1866, probably going back to Irving's forecast that the resurrection of the righteous would inaugurate the millennium about 1867/8.⁴¹⁸ In *The Character of our Present Testimony and Work* (1865) Cardale exhorted ministers to respond to prophecy of coming judgments by engaging in a vigorous work of testimony with a view to forming new congregations⁴¹⁹, as well as acknowledging the movement's failure to carry out its commission hitherto.⁴²⁰ The days of its greatest growth lay ahead.

⁴¹³ Quoted by Dr. Capadose in a homily to the angels of the Seven Churches, 14th July 1899 (S.Newman-Norton, *The Hamburg Schism*, v).

⁴¹⁴ Copinger, "Annals", 117.

⁴¹⁵ R.S.Ward, 20; cf. Copinger, "Annals", 122; E.Miller, *Irvingism*, 1.315-6; Newman-Norton, *Hamburg Schism*, vii. A coadjutor was authorised to perform apostolic functions but his authority ceased on the death of the apostle to whom he was attached (G.L.Standring, *Albury and the Catholic Apostolic Church*, 29-30).

⁴¹⁶ Newman-Norton, *Hamburg Schism*, vii-viii.

⁴¹⁷ *Neue Apostelgeschichte / New Acts of the Apostles*, 168.

⁴¹⁸ E.Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity foredoomed of God: a discourse on the prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse which relate to these latter times, and until the Second Advent*, 364, 415.

⁴¹⁹ [Cardale], *Character*, 1, 28-39; E.Miller, *Irvingism*, 1.294-5; R.S.Ward, 66.

⁴²⁰ [Cardale], *Character*, 2-3, 45.

3. THE NATURE AND CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH

The Brethren and Catholic Apostolic preoccupation with ecclesiology sprang from devotion to Christ, who had promised: "I will build my church" (Matthew 16.18). They sought to understand what God was building, how, and what role Christians were to play. It is in their views concerning the church's constitution (rather than their ecclesiastical structures, or their beliefs concerning spiritual gifts) that their ecclesiological centre is to be found. Therefore, this chapter concentrates on the Spirit's role in constituting the church, and the relationship between the church and the world.

3.1. Brethren

3.1.1. *The dangers of misunderstanding Darby's thought*

The evolution of Darby's distinctive ecclesiology was bound up with the situation obtaining in Ireland during his early ministry. Although he could be considered to have a very low doctrine of the church in view of his belief that it had been irreparably ruined, it can be shown that this belief derived its significance in his ecclesiological scheme precisely because as a high-churchman he saw the concept of a visible and universal earthly church as important, a belief which contrasted with the practice, if not the theory, of many later Open Brethren.

We must bear in mind, however, several distinctions which Darby made, which have made him peculiarly liable to misunderstanding. He believed that the church may be viewed in its divine aspect (as indefectible) and its human aspect (as liable to ruin because dependent on human responsibility): while the church as a divine creation could not fail, the dispensation of human responsibility in which it was placed might.¹ He differentiated this from the traditional idea (held by Calvin²) of the church as visible and invisible, preferring to distinguish between the two aspects of the church or assembly as "the body of Christ in heaven, and the habitation of the Holy Ghost on earth".³ However, this must not be confused with the related distinction between the church as the centre of God's heavenly purposes, and Israel as the centre of God's earthly purposes.

¹ Darby, *CW*, 1.144-5. Cf. Calvin's conviction that human faithlessness could not stop God from preserving the church (*Commentary on the Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, 316 (on 2 Timothy 2.19); T.George, *Theology of the Reformers*, 237-8).

² Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.1.7; A.McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 137. The invisible church comprised all the elect from all ages, and the visible church all those on earth who professed to worship Christ.

³ J.N.Darby, *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, 4.319. Darby began the *Synopsis* in 1847, and seems to have worked rapidly through Scripture (cf. [idem], *Letters*, 1.145 (1st June 1847), 221 (9th December 1849)).

Darby's acknowledgment of the duality of divine and human aspects of the church did not imply a devaluation of the human, the church universal as it subsisted on earth. Writing in 1849, he appealed to the nature of baptism in support of his belief that the universal church was intended to be visible:

People have wished to make an invisible Church of the whole body, and visible churches in which evil might be found. But it is very evident that baptism introduced not into a church, but into the Church in general upon earth, so that this way of looking at it has no support in the word. The true distinction is not between the Church and the churches, but between the Church viewed in its human responsibility, and the Church in the counsels of God ... ⁴

Although he sometimes distinguished between churches (the administrative form on earth) and the church (the united body), this can be viewed as a version of his distinction between the human aspect of the church as the habitation of the Spirit, and its divine aspect as the body of Christ.⁵

3.1.2. The heavenly church and the earthly Israel

We have noticed in passing one of Darby's earliest ecclesiological emphases - the church as heavenly in origin and nature; this (like so much of his ecclesiology) flowed directly from personal experience. The connections between Darby's soteriology and his ecclesiology are often apparent in his writings; one might almost describe the latter as a reflection of the former. Looking back on his "deliverance", he wrote:

I had found peace to my own soul by finding my oneness with Christ, that it was no longer myself as in the flesh before God, but that I was in Christ, accepted in the Beloved, and sitting in heavenly places in Him. This led me directly to the apprehension of what the true church of God was, those that were united to Christ in heaven: I at once felt that all the parish [system] was not that.⁶

Like many other early Brethren, Darby would initially have accepted the traditional Anglican definition of the church as a congregation of faithful men⁷, but read more into this than most of his contemporaries.⁸ His perception of the church as heavenly led him to define it in "Considerations Addressed to the Archbishop of Dublin" as:

... a congregation of faithful souls redeemed out of 'this naughty world' by God manifest in the flesh, a people purified to himself by Christ, purified in the heart by faith, knit together, by the bond of this common faith in Him, to Him

⁴ Darby, CW, 3.370.

⁵ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.114 (5th February 1846).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.624-5 (Memorandum, 1868).

⁷ Article XIX of the Church of England; cf. Borlase, *Reasons for Withdrawing*, 15; Hargrove, *Reasons for Retiring*, 4; Harris, *What is a Church?*, 6. Newton and Borlase defined the church as "the whole visible body that hold the name of Christ" (*Answers to Questions*, 5).

⁸ D'Arcy Sirr, an Irish evangelical clergyman responding to the spread of Brethrenism, understood "faithful" as meaning that the individuals were not apostates, heretics, or excommunicated as notorious sinners: only God could judge their hearts (*Reasons for Abiding in the Established Church: a letter to the Rev. Charles Hargrove, A.B.*, 50).

their Head sitting at the right hand of the Father, having consequently their conversation (*commonwealth*) in heaven, from whence they look for the Saviour, the Lord of Glory; Phil.3.20. As a body, therefore, they belong to heaven; *there* is their portion in the restitution of all things, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. On earth they are, as a people, necessarily subordinate; they are nothing and nobody; their King is in heaven, their interests and constitution heavenly. [He then quoted John 18.36]⁹

Already, before the culmination of his "deliverance", a sharp disjunction was evident between the church's true heavenly character and its apparent weakness and powerlessness on earth. Because the church belonged as a body to heaven, it had no power in this world; with their Head, Christians would share humiliation here, but faith saw His humiliation as the source of spiritual life, and so eschewed all prospect of earthly glory.¹⁰ Darby stated in a preface to the published version of this work (which appeared in 1865) that it represented the germ of his ecclesiological understanding, so we must not posit too great a change in his ecclesiology as a result of his "deliverance"; he continued to assert that the church was like her rejected Saviour in being a heavenly entity, and shared in His rejection during this dispensation.¹¹ although his opposition to anything which smacked of Erastianism has been compared with the early Tractarian insistence upon the church's independence from state interference¹², Darby later contrasted the two movements, asserting that Brethrenism had arisen as a result of seeing the church as the body of those united to Christ in heaven, rather than as a result of dissatisfaction with the Anglican apostolic succession.¹³

Linked with Darby's view of the church as heavenly was his enduring contribution to later fundamentalist theology, the systematic articulation of the hermeneutical system known as dispensationalism.¹⁴ This rests upon a radical disjunction between the church and Israel, corresponding to the heavenly and earthly spheres in which God worked out His purpose.¹⁵ For Darby, the leading characteristic of the heavenly sphere was grace, and that of the earthly government.¹⁶

Dispensations related to God's earthly purpose: in 1839 Darby defined a dispensation as "any arranged dealing of God in which man has been set before his fall, and having

⁹ Darby, *CW*, 1.5-6. Whately also made repeated use of John 18.36, contrasting the earthly nature of God's kingdom during the Jewish dispensation and its heavenly nature during the Christian (Letter I).

¹⁰ Darby, *CW*, 1.1748.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.376.

¹² T.C.F.Stunt, "Two Nineteenth-century movements", *Evangelical Quarterly* 37 (1965): 221-2.

¹³ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.624-5 (Memorandum, 1868).

¹⁴ Bass, 7, 1348.

¹⁵ R.A.Huebner, *J.N.Darby's teaching regarding Dispensations, Ages, Administrations and the Two Parentheses*, iii.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2; cf. Darby, *CW*, 11.125 (1857).

been tried, has failed, and therefore God has been obliged to act by other means."¹⁷ Strictly speaking, dispensations covered the period from the Flood to the Cross, being dependent upon the introduction of government after the Flood.¹⁸ In each, God related to humanity on the basis of certain principles, according to which He would judge¹⁹; each was "a certain state of things, established by the authority of God, during a given period."²⁰ Their character was dictated by the manner in which Christ was revealed therein.²¹ Each one had ended in failure and ruin, because of human sinfulness;²² God might revive His work, but it was impossible to restore it²³; a new beginning had to be made using the faithful remnant of the failed dispensation.²⁴

The church immediately after Pentecost was entirely Jewish in composition, the remnant from the Jewish dispensation continuing as the nucleus of the assembly; if the unbelieving Jews had repented at this point, Christ would have returned (Darby quoted Acts 3.19-21 in support of this). Since they rejected this offer of grace, the way was clear for God to raise up a new instrument - Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.²⁵ To Paul was given the truth of the church as a body which in union with its heavenly Head transcended the Jew-Gentile distinction.²⁶ As God's habitation, the assembly replaced Judaism²⁷, and the fall of Jerusalem represented God's judgment on the Jews and the consummation of the breach between Christianity and Judaism, in preparation for which Christians were warned to "go outside the camp".²⁸ Thus God set aside for a time the course of His earthly government, to enter into gracious relationship with a heavenly people²⁹; this paralleled the transfer of earthly government from Jerusalem to the Gentiles which took place at the Exile.³⁰

Since it existed during the period in which God set aside His purpose relating to His earthly people, and since dispensations had reference to God's earthly dealings³¹, the church as Christ's body was often described as a parenthesis: Darby called it "an

¹⁷ Huebner, op. cit., 10, quoting Darby, in *Collectanea: Being Some of the Subjects Considered at Leamington, on 3d June and Four following Days in the year 1839*, 41.

¹⁸ Huebner, op. cit., 8, 10-1, 15; cf. Darby, in *Collectanea*, 42; idem, *CW*, 2.132, 374-5.

¹⁹ Darby, *CW*, 1.180.

²⁰ Ibid., 1.169. Another writer defined dispensations as "modes of divine action towards sinful man" ("A letter on the dispensational study of Scripture", *CW* 8 (1841): 32).

²¹ Elmore, 83; cf. Darby, *CW*, 1.98-9.

²² Darby, *CW*, 1.125.

²³ Ibid., 1.185.

²⁴ Ibid., 1.154.

²⁵ Ibid., 3.367; cf. [idem], *Letters*, 1.162 (1st May 1848); idem, *Synopsis*, 5.367.

²⁶ Ibid., 3.369; cf. idem, *Synopsis*, 5.367.

²⁷ Darby, *Synopsis*, 4.75.

²⁸ Ibid., 5.367.

²⁹ Darby, *CW*, 3.386.

³⁰ Darby, *Synopsis*, 1.450.

³¹ Cf. Huebner, *Darby's teaching regarding Dispensations.*, 56.

extraordinary break in the dispensations", formed out of earth but not for it; "though making a most instructive parenthesis, it forms no part of the regular order of God's earthly plans, but is merely an interruption of them to give a fuller character and meaning to them."³² Thus its earthly existence was not of its essence, for "all the doings of God upon the earth have reference entirely and directly to the Jews, as the centre of His earthly counsels and of His government."³³ By contrast, Christians "belong in the counsels of God to a system set up by Him in Christ before the world existed, which is not of the world when it does exist, and exists after the fashion of this world has passed away."³⁴

There would be a time in the future when, once again, there was no church on earth. Because the church was a heavenly body, its future hope was also heavenly: thus Darby expected the saints of this dispensation to be raptured to heaven with Christ before the coming judgments on earth and Christ's visible return to earth to inaugurate the millennium.³⁵

Darby's concept of the church era as a parenthesis seems to have begun its development when a Mr. Tweedy (a clergyman who had joined the Brethren in Ireland) suggested to him that 2 Thessalonians 2.1-2 indicated a coming of Christ for believers *before* the Great Tribulation, which was to form the seventieth week of Daniel 9, the Christian era being a parenthesis between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks.³⁶ It was reflected in the agenda for the 1833 Powerscourt Conference, which implied that the Christian dispensation was to be distinguished from those preceding and following it.³⁷

However, disagreement between Darby and Newton first surfaced over the relation between church, kingdom, and Israel, as Darby developed the idea that the church, because it was heavenly, did not feature in Old Testament prophecy.³⁸ "Prophecy gives the career of *earthly* events But the church is not earthly Hence it was hid in God from the foundation of the world (Eph.iii.), and the prophets do not speak of it."³⁹ Yet the church was extensively foreshadowed in Old Testament typology, Elmore going

³² Darby, *CW*, 1.93-4.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2.347.

³⁴ Darby, *Synopsis*, 4.288.

³⁵ Bass, 39-40; cf. Darby, "The Rapture of the Saints and the Character of the Jewish Remnant", *CW*, 11.118-67.

³⁶ Huebner, *Precious Truths*, 1.75-6, quoting W.Kelly, *BT*, n.s. 4 (1899): 315-6; Rowdon, *Origins*, 97, quoting W.Kelly, *The Coming and the Day of the Lord*, 120; cf. Darby, *CW*, 11.67. Huebner dates the resolution of Darby's difficulties to 1830, but Newton dated it to 1832/3, citing a letter from Darby ("Fry MS", 238-9; cf. G.H.Fromow, *B.W.Newton and S.P.Tregelles: Teachers of the Faith and the Future*, 44-5).

³⁷ Rowdon, *Origins*, 97.

³⁸ L.E.Dixon, "The Importance of J.N.Darby and the Brethren movement in the history of conservative theology", *CBR* 41 (1991): 44.

³⁹ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.162 (1st May 1848).

so far as to say that "If anyone ever tried to apply even the details of the law and the levitical system in their principles to the church, Darby did."⁴⁰ Prophecy dealt with events on earth, in the sphere of government, rather than those in heaven, and thus focused on Jewish rather than churchly hopes.⁴¹ It was to be taken literally when it referred to the Jews, whose inheritance was earthly, but symbolically when it referred to the Gentiles, since earthly things were not their portion.⁴² Darby contrasted Old Testament prophecy's earthly emphasis with the New Testament's heavenly emphasis, denying that the church took over Israel's earthly privileges and future.⁴³ "The assembly ..., though formed on earth, belongs to heaven; the kingdom, though governed from heaven, belongs to earth - has its place and ministration there."⁴⁴ He asserted that most contemporary prophetic writers had failed to appreciate these distinctions.⁴⁵

Newton violently opposed Darby's system, alleging that it entailed two ways of salvation, two ends, and two gospels.⁴⁶ He considered it subversive of catholic truth, and felt that the intricate interpretative effort needed to sustain such a system could only lead one to despair of ever knowing any truth from Scripture.⁴⁷ For his part Darby considered that Newton's teaching effectively reduced the church to the level of Israel, diminishing the privileges of New Covenant believers.⁴⁸ Although he attacked Newton for controlling the *Christian Witness* in the interests of his teachings, Coad has suggested that what the Plymouth leaders were seeking to do was to develop their convictions regarding the differences between the dispensations and the ruin of this age in a manner consistent with the fundamentals of Reformed theology, emphasising the unity of God's dealings with humanity⁴⁹, a point at which Darby departed from the Reformed tradition.

Bass considers that dispensationalism was unknown as a system before Darby.⁵⁰ However, the extent of Darby's originality has long been a point of contention: he himself claimed that this system of interpretation came fresh to him⁵¹, and that he arrived at his particular concept of the church as heavenly independently of any

⁴⁰ Elmore, 182n; cf. Darby, *CW*, 2.373. The Tabernacle symbolised (1) the heavens, where God dwelt and revealed Himself, and (2) Christ as God's dwelling, and therefore of saints as the house over which Christ was the Son (Darby, *Synopsis*, 1.73).

⁴¹ Darby, *CW*, 2.373, 376; cf. idem, *Synopsis*, 2.207.

⁴² Darby, *CW*, 2.35.

⁴³ Ibid., 2.376; cf. Weremchuk, 121.

⁴⁴ Darby, *Synopsis*, 3.91.

⁴⁵ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.231 (February 1851).

⁴⁶ Fromow, 105.

⁴⁷ "Fry MS", 329 (Newton to Harns, Soltau and Batten, 30th March 1845).

⁴⁸ [Darby], *Letters*, 3.284-7 (14th November 1844).

⁴⁹ Coad, *History*, 130-1.

⁵⁰ Bass, 18.

⁵¹ Ibid., 26; cf. Darby, *CW*, 1.44.

existing theological tradition, stating that this independence was characteristic of his theological method.⁵² Darby rarely gave any indication of the nature or extent of his dependence on others, and one is left with the potentially misleading impression that he worked his theology out for himself with nothing but the text of Scripture and the illumination of the Spirit to aid him.⁵³ Bass alleges that Darby was dependent on Rebal (an earlier expositor of biblical prophecy) and on Irvingite ideas, but does not substantiate this.⁵⁴ Dixon restricts Darby's originality to his idea of the pre-tribulation rapture and the denial that the church was a subject of Old Testament prophecy.⁵⁵

Darby's division of the Scriptures into those relating to the future of the church and those relating to the future of Israel may not be original, for it has been suggested that this was introduced to Dublin in 1833 by an Anglican missionary from London⁵⁶; it was certainly current in England by 1830.⁵⁷ Ryrie, who summarises the history of this method of interpretation, offers the verdict (in conscious disagreement with Bass) that "Informed dispensationalists ... recognize that as a system dispensationalism was largely formulated by Darby, but that outlines of a dispensationalist approach to the Scriptures are found much earlier."⁵⁸ However, Huebner denies this, pointing out that a division of salvation history into time periods is not the crucial feature of dispensational theology.⁵⁹ Clearly the question is not yet settled.

3.1.3. The church, constituted at Pentecost

As early as 1828, Darby was appealing to what became a favourite Brethren text, Matthew 18.20: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Here was where, in contrast to the disunity of the sects and the establishment's worldliness, the unity of Christ's body was evident and the Spirit's power promised.⁶⁰ However, at this stage he saw Christians as bound together by a shared faith rather than by the Spirit's action in baptising them into one body.⁶¹

In his mature thought, Darby stressed that the agent of this gathering was the Spirit, as he explained in 1849 in a work entitled "What is the Church?"⁶² He laid down as

⁵² [Darby], *Letters*, 3.306 (1850).

⁵³ Darby, *CW*, 2.4; Elmore, 29.

⁵⁴ Bass, 27n.

⁵⁵ Dixon, "Importance of Darby", 44.

⁵⁶ Fromow, 44.

⁵⁷ Rowdon, *Origins*, 149, cf. 148.

⁵⁸ C.C.Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 66.

⁵⁹ Huebner, *Darby's teaching regarding Dispensations*, 95.

⁶⁰ [Darby], *Letters*, 3.356 [1855].

⁶¹ Weremchuk, 46.

⁶² Darby, *CW*, 3.358-92.

axiomatic that the church was constituted at Pentecost by the sending down of the Spirit to unite believers on earth with Christ in heaven to form one body⁶³, to form God's habitation on earth.⁶⁴ Christ did not die merely to secure the salvation of individuals, but "that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11.52)⁶⁵, another favourite Brethren text. "Gathering" became something of a technical term for Brethren; it was not the possession of a common life in Christ which constituted a group of believers as an assembly, but their being gathered, as Darby's editor William Kelly (1820-1906) explained: "It is not the fact of being Christians that constitutes God's assembly, but their being gathered unto the name of the Lord."⁶⁶ This "gathering" or visible drawing together out of the world was in fulfilment of God's purpose to bring all things under Christ⁶⁷, which involved establishing Christ as Head over all things and Head of the church.⁶⁸ The church could not exist as a heavenly body until Christ took His place in heaven as Head, and the Spirit as agent of this gathering could not come to constitute it until Christ was thus glorified because the object of His testimony - the exalted Christ - was lacking.⁶⁹ While there were believers in Christ before Pentecost, they did not constitute the church, since its members had to be "gathered" by the Spirit⁷⁰: "union with a Saviour hid in God ... is of the essence of the church".⁷¹ Thus Old Testament saints were by definition excluded from the church, since this union was neither revealed nor promised to them.

The metaphor (drawn in particular from Ephesians) of the church as Christ's body represented it as that which Christ promised to build, the company of the elect since Pentecost which would be brought to completion. As such, it was indefectible; Satan could not destroy it.⁷² Its security was assured by the fact that it was set up on the footing of divine grace, not of human responsibility.⁷³ The Spirit's continuing presence among believers gathering in Christ's name was constitutive of the assembly.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 3.367, 373-4. This reflected the individual believer's status as united with Christ in heaven by the Spirit ([*idem*], *Letters*, 3.352-4 [c.1855]). Darby's thinking echoed Calvin's teaching on Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper: he described believing partakers as being lifted up to heavenly places and united with Christ by the Spirit (*Institutes*, IV.17.10, 26).

⁶⁴ Darby, *CW*, 3.375.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.366; cf. 1.139.

⁶⁶ W.Kelly, *Lectures on the church of God*, 257, cf. 81. This, according to Brethren of all shades, was what the "sects" (i.e. the existing denominations) did not do, since they gathered into the name of a human founder or a distinctive doctrine.

⁶⁷ Darby, *CW*, 3.366 (referring to Ephesians 1.10).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.378 (referring to Colossians 1).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.385.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.366.

⁷¹ [Darby], *Letters*, 3.286 (14th November 1844).

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1.117 (received 5th February 1846).

⁷³ Darby, *CW*, 3.389.

The body exists in virtue of there being one Holy Ghost. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling. Indeed this is the very point which is denied here [Plymouth, under Newton]. Then Christ necessarily nourishes and cherishes us as His own flesh, as members of His body; and this goes on "till we all come," &c. (Eph.iv.) Hence I apprehend we cannot deny the body and its unity, whatever its unfaithfulness and condition, and (so far as the Holy Ghost is owned) His operation in it, without denying the divine title of the Holy Ghost, and the care and headship of Christ over the church.⁷⁴

Whereas possession of the Spirit was "the distinguishing characteristic of the believer, of the Church ..." ⁷⁵, the essence of the church's ruin was the loss or disowning of the Spirit as present in power in the church.⁷⁶ The great error of all other religious bodies was that they were not constituted on the ground outlined above, but were either wider (admitting the world) or narrower (excluding believers).⁷⁷

Newton considered that belief in the church's constitution at Pentecost precluded any notion that the post-Pentecost church was earthly or "Jewish" in its standing and hopes.⁷⁸ His point highlights a tension in Darby's thought: in the movement's early days, the Anglican clergyman John Synge and some of the Dublin believers thought in terms of meetings drawing together believers from different churches, supplementary to their regular patterns of worship; Synge had argued that continuing to worship in the established church was analogous to the continuing participation of the apostles in temple and synagogue worship after Pentecost. In response, the seceders needed to claim that the church was only formed once connections with Judaism were severed.⁷⁹ Similarly, Darby considered that the Gentile dispensation, in which the church was placed, began as a distinct thing after the Jewish rejection of the gospel was conclusively demonstrated by the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7).⁸⁰ It was then that God ended His testimony to the Jews and began the gathering of a heavenly body⁸¹, the mystery concerning which was revealed to Paul. It would appear that between Acts 2 and Acts 7 the church, according to Darby, was constituted by the Spirit (and thus united with Christ in heaven) but its heavenly character was not yet fully manifest; it was still bound in the graveclothes of the Jewish dispensation.

⁷⁴ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.116 (received 5th February 1846).

⁷⁵ Darby, *CW*, 3.71.

⁷⁶ [Darby], *Letters*, 3.289 (14th April 1847).

⁷⁷ See section 4.1.

⁷⁸ B.W.Newton, *Thoughts on the Apocalypse*, 24-5.

⁷⁹ T.C.F.Stunt, "John Synge and the Early Brethren", *JCBRF* 28 (1976): 54-7.

⁸⁰ Cf. Darby, *CW*, 1.130.

⁸¹ Darby, *Synopsis*, 5.368, cf. 4.14.

3.1.4. *The church and the world*

The leading theme in Brethren thinking about the world was the need for the believer to separate from it as evil. Darby commented that when God began to call individuals to Himself (in Genesis 12), the distinctive feature of this calling was separation from a sinful world; this was to mark the church also.⁸² It was entailed by the church's heavenly status and earthly rejection: "As Israel was separated from the nations, so was the Church from the world - it was no longer of it."⁸³

In his article "On Conformity to the World"⁸⁴, Borlase drew out the implications of this approach. The church remained in the world solely as a witness to God's character: "'how far may we mingle with the world?' Even as far and as often as we can witness for Jesus."⁸⁵ Thus he rejected all improvement of mind and worldly learning which did not lead to a greater appreciation of God's glory (dim though light from such sources was, compared to that of the gospel) or have God's service as its aim.⁸⁶ Christians were castigated for being indistinguishable in their attitudes and ambitions from non-Christians.⁸⁷ By contrast, Christ was a witness for God against the world while yet in it; He came to deliver believers from conformity to that which crucified Him⁸⁸, and they were to serve Him diligently, following Him in their attitude to the world, and so be ready for His return.⁸⁹

This being so, Brethren rejected the idea of an established church. In Darby's response to Archbishop Magee's charge, he described it and the clerical petition as a claim for state protection based on the erroneous idea that the civil ruler was in a position to choose the best religion for his subjects to follow.⁹⁰ The church was not "another aspect of the same body", since Christ's kingdom was not of this world (John 18.36)⁹¹; Darby was shocked at the prospect of the clergy seeking security under the auspices of the very world against which they were witnessing.⁹² The Papal challenge to the sovereign's authority could legitimately be met by state opposition to its *temporal* claims⁹³, but the *spiritual* battle was to be fought not by seeking state

⁸² Darby, *CW*, 19.126-8.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 3.375.

⁸⁴ *CWit* 1 (1834): 460-8.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 460.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 462.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 465.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 467.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 468.

⁹⁰ Darby, *CW*, 1.5.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 1.9; cf. Whately, 20.

⁹² Weremchuk, 45; following *Interesting Reminiscences*, 2-3 (Bellett).

⁹³ Darby, *CW*, 1.15.

protection, but by spiritual means, winning people to Christ.⁹⁴ The church and its ministers could not have worldly standing (and freedom from opposition) and remain faithful to Christ; there was a fundamental contradiction which could not but crop up in a religious system which relied on worldly standing to maintain its influence.⁹⁵ Implicit was the belief that the sphere of earthly government was under Satan's dominion, and no place for the consistent believer.

It will come as no surprise that there was little Brethren material on social and political issues in relation to the church, but there are several possible reasons for this. *Firstly*, it could be said that their views represented a continuity with the conservatism of traditional Anglican evangelicalism, and that they saw no need to write about a subject which was already clearly understood within their circles. However, their withdrawal from the world contrasted with contemporary evangelical involvement in politics and philanthropy.

Secondly, it could be that the lack of material was due to lack of interest in this theme; the Brethren seem to have been interested in the world only as a backdrop for the drama of salvation. In addition, their concept of redemption was not really developed beyond the redemption of individuals, who were seen as being redeemed *from* the world rather than *with* it or as firstfruits *of* it; although their espousal of premillennialism entailed a belief in a bright future for the earth as the seat of Christ's earthly kingdom, this did not extend to human social institutions.

Thirdly, one could argue (as have writers as diverse as F.W.Newman and Iain Murray⁹⁶) that the urgency of their message gave Brethren little time for reflection: the imminence of Christ's return necessitated a strict concentration on the priority of preaching the gospel, and the workload of leaders such as Darby left them little time for writing.

The main reason for Brethren lack of interest in social issues was more likely to have been theological rather than circumstantial. In particular, we must see it as being due to the implications drawn from the concept (shared with Catholic Apostolics as well as many others) of the church as a heavenly entity separate from evil, and the attempt to identify with the rejected Christ, as well as the sense of the imminency of the Rapture which necessitated putting service above study.⁹⁷ This attitude did not represent a rationalising by an underprivileged group of a marginal position in society: there were Brethren who could have chosen to exercise influence in the political and legal spheres,

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.10, 15.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.12. Whately called for the church's separation from alliance with the state, but opposed secession (Whately, 190).

⁹⁶ F.W.Newman, 34-5; Murray, 202-4.

⁹⁷ Darby, *Synopsis*, 1.v i.

and later in the century some began to do so. Their attitude resulted from choice: the need to separate from evil provided ample justification in the minds of many Brethren for choosing to occupy a marginal position in religious as well as political life.

3.2. Catholic Apostolic

As Christenson has written,

The great bulk of Catholic Apostolic literature has to do with the nature and structure of the Church. This is rooted in their conviction that the Church has a certain God-given constitution, and only as the eternal ordinances of God are put into effect can the Church become that spiritual dwelling place of God in which He makes Himself known.⁹⁸

Ecclesiology was central to their thought, and we shall consider it under the headings provided by their catechism's definition of the church as: "the congregation of all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and are baptized according to His commandment. ... the Household of God, the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Ghost."⁹⁹

3.2.1. The church - God's people

The Scottish Confession of 1560, which Irving preferred to the Westminster Confession, defined the Kirk in terms which emphasised divine election: "one company and multitude of men chosen by God, who rightly worship and embrace Him by true faith in Christ Jesus, who is the only Head of the Kirk, even as it is the body and spouse of Christ Jesus."¹⁰⁰ He stressed that this church had its origin in God's acts rather than man's,¹⁰¹ in particular the sacrament of infant baptism. Baptism (which he viewed as regenerating and as securing the remission of sins) was sufficient for admission to the church, visible and invisible.¹⁰² Nothing else was needed, as the "Great Testimony" reiterated: "Baptism alone marks off the Church from the world; every distinction, by which the people of God are represented as only a part of the baptized, is an invention of men, making covenants of their own with God, and usurping His judgment."¹⁰³ For Irving, baptism constituted "a people in covenant, and responsible for the privileges of the covenant."¹⁰⁴ It was the efficacy of the sacraments as channels of divine grace and the covenant relation thus introduced which made the church more than a voluntary organisation, giving it divine constitution and a

⁹⁸ L.Christenson, "Pentecostalism's Forgotten Forerunner", in *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, ed. V.Synan, 22.

⁹⁹ Catechism, §III.1, in *The Liturgy and Other Divine Offices of the Church*.

¹⁰⁰ Ch.VIII, in A.Cochrane, ed., *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century*, 169.

¹⁰¹ Shaw, 166.

¹⁰² Irving, CW, 2.302, 348; cf. [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.118-9.

¹⁰³ "Great Testimony", §27.

¹⁰⁴ E.Irving, *The Last Days: A Discourse on the Evil Character of these our Times*, xxxviii.

divine mandate for government and discipline as Christ's body.¹⁰⁵ However, by 1832, with his faith in the Church of Scotland shattered, Irving wrote: "a church, in the apostolic and true sense, means any two or three met together in the name of the Lord."¹⁰⁶

In the *Morning Watch*, Tudor repeated the Anglican definition of the church as a congregation of faithful men in which God's word was preached and the sacraments rightly administered. This, he suggested, could be viewed in three ways: as the visible church of professing Christians; as Christ's fold, whose sheep were known only to Him; and as an ecclesiastical polity set apart to preach, administer the sacraments and practise discipline. Indefectibility and catholicity applied to the first, perfection, unity and infallibility to the second, and authority to the third: confusion sprang from applying these attributes to all three aspects of the church.¹⁰⁷

The apostle Dalton surveyed contemporary answers to the question forming the title of his 1863 work, *What is the Church?*, and pointed out their inadequacies. Against the view which identified the church with the political establishment, he argued that though responsible to one another they were not to be identified, nor was one dependent on the other.¹⁰⁸ Against the high-church view that the church was a divine institution founded by Christ to fulfil a particular vocation, he urged that this was not the whole truth, since the Jewish order was likewise divinely-appointed; such an approach omitted the church's distinctive feature.¹⁰⁹ The evangelical distinction between the visible and invisible church he saw as founded on ignorance concerning the nature of baptism as a divine act conferring grace and admitting to Christ's body; conversion, which was also God's act, was a restoration rather than the cause of that life. Therefore, all members of the church on earth were in reality children of God, and there was no ground for dividing up the injunctions of Scripture between the visible and invisible church.¹¹⁰ The Roman Catholic view of their church as the universal church could not stand, he argued, because it denied membership of Christ's body to those who were regenerate through baptism within other churches. It was schismatic to insist on communion with the bishop of Rome as essential in addition to baptism as the standard of membership in Christ's body.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ E.Irving, *An Apology for the ancient Fulness and Purity of the Doctrne of the Kirk of Scotland*, 37; cf. *idem*, *CW*, 2.385-6.

¹⁰⁶ Irving, "Narrative of Facts", *Fraser's Magazine*, March 1832, 202.

¹⁰⁷ [J.O.Tudor], "Prophetic aspect of the church; its privileges and powers", *MW* 3 (1831): 3.

¹⁰⁸ H.Dalton, *What is the Church?* 5-6.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9-11.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 12-3.

In a little-known series of lectures to candidates for sealing, apparently given soon after its introduction, Cardale emphasised divine action in bringing the church into existence:

If ye be looking at the constitution of His Church as that eternal form whereby God, by the Holy Ghost, manifests Himself in the body of those elect whom He has gathered out of the world, then the members of that body are all parts of the purpose of God and cannot be other than as revealed in Scripture, and as He gave them to be.¹¹²

God's work extended to the church's form and order, which were not to be seen merely as better than those adopted by others, but as divinely-given: "God's constitution of the Church is as sacred as Himself; ... it is the form of his own manifestation in His body the Church".¹¹³ Such organisation was perfectly adapted to the end of making the elect partakers in Christ's post-resurrection glory.¹¹⁴ It was this strong belief in the church as divinely constituted for a particular purpose, along with a rejection of anything which savoured of attempting to bring in God's kingdom through social amelioration, which led Catholic Apostolics to disapprove of the plethora of religious societies around them. God's work could only be done if His order was followed.

3.2.2. *The church - Christ's body*

The extent of Irving's ecclesiological debt to Coleridge has been widely acknowledged, if not studied in detail. Under this influence, Irving could write that "the visible Church is the sensible form of the heavenly communion"¹¹⁵, and emphasised the importance of the principle of incarnation in a manner which was to prove seminal for Catholic Apostolic thought. In his 1830 article "The Church, with her Endowment of Holiness and Power"¹¹⁶ he explained how, by the redemption wrought through Christ's death and resurrection, God had purchased a body through which to show forth His holiness and power.

The body is the organ by which the spirit within a man doth manifest itself to the world; and the body of Christ, which is the Church, is the organ by which He, acting from the invisible seat of the Father by the invisible Spirit, must manifest Himself unto the world. There is no other medium of communication between Christ abiding with the Father and the world but the Church in the flesh; ... she is the organ of communication between the invisible Christ and the visible world.¹¹⁷

¹¹² J.B.Cardale, "Teachings Addressed to Candidates for the Laying on of Apostles' Hands", 3.

¹¹³ Ibid; cf. Dalton, *Four Discourses*, 36. Miller considered that this produced a mechanical view of God's action, and a failure to recognise that divine power was superior to human rites and able to work in their absence (*Irvingism*, 2.14-5).

¹¹⁴ [Cardale], *Readings*, 2.175.

¹¹⁵ Irving, *Missionaries*, 85.

¹¹⁶ Irving, *CW*, 5.449-506. This first appeared in *MW* 2 (1830): 630-68, and in condensed form in *PW*, 1.546-93.

¹¹⁷ Irving, *CW*, 5.454.

For Irving, the mystery was that such a finite body should show forth God's infinite attributes; this was done by the Son and the Spirit taking connection with a portion of creation (the election), constituting it the church, God's dwelling-place. Christ was its Head and the Spirit was its life.¹¹⁸

Coleridge believed that the truths of Christianity were all necessary and eternal truths of reason, apart from the question of historical evidence for them.¹¹⁹ For him, according to one scholar, "the purpose of history is to illustrate metaphysical principles."¹²⁰ Yet, as Irving made clear, they needed to be embodied: this underlay Catholic Apostolic emphasis on the church as a visible and divinely-constituted body. As one writer put it: "Anyone who would manifest himself to another, must have a body adapted for that end, otherwise he must for ever remain invisible, and consequently unknown."¹²¹ Drummond explained why such a body was needed:

Moses wrote, and the prophets spoke about God, but it was not enough, and so God was made flesh, and we saw, and felt, and handled the Eternal Life; in like manner we have had the New Testament and the writings of the Apostles, but they were insufficient until God sent His Spirit to set up His Church as at the beginning, and then we saw the substance of that which the New Testament describes.¹²²

In consequence of this, the Incarnation assumed a critical importance in Catholic Apostolic ecclesiology: Dalton described it as "the centre round which evolves [*sic*] the whole system of divine revelation."¹²³ He contrasted the Jewish dispensation (which had only the law of God), with the Christian era, in which "the Son of God Incarnate, works, and manifests God, through and by and in the Church."¹²⁴ God's purpose in creation was to establish the incarnate Christ as Head of the church and Head over all things.¹²⁵ God's purpose for humanity was not merely recovery of our unfallen state, but "exaltation to that state which God purposed for him before all worlds; and what is that? INCORPORATION INTO THE MYSTICAL BODY OF THE SON OF GOD, - ONENESS WITH THE SON INCARNATE."¹²⁶ Thus the church's constitution was based on the principle of incarnation; the man Jesus was its Head, and revealed Himself to man through men. The church was the body of Christ "tangibly and historically

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.470; cf. Strachan, *Irving*, 77.

¹¹⁹ Prickett, 11.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹²¹ C.M.Carré, *The Past, Present, and Future of the Christian Church*, 52.

¹²² Letter of February 1836, quoted in R.S.Ward, 52.

¹²³ H.Dalton, *Four Discourses on the First and Second Advents*, 5.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 4, 19-20.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

developed."¹²⁷ Indeed, as W.W.Andrews¹²⁸ pointed out, the church *could not* exist until Christ was constituted as its Head at his exaltation.¹²⁹ Since the church was viewed as a fruit of the Incarnation, Old Testament saints were excluded.¹³⁰ As Dalton explained,

... the Christian Church is not a mere enlargement of the Jewish polity. it is wholly distinct in kind, and immeasurably above it. The Jews were indeed the favoured people of God, but the Church is the *body* of Christ. ... The Spirit *influenced* the Jew, but *dwells* in the christian. The Jewish government was a theocracy; the christian [*sic*] Church is God's habitation.¹³¹

Implications for ministry were drawn from this emphasis on the Incarnation. Firstly, there was a belief that God worked through visible human means. Catholic Apostolics viewed ministers as men through whom Christ exercised *His* ministry as Apostle, Prophet and so on; He did not delegate or transfer His power and authority to apostles, for instance, but rather used them as instruments.¹³² The church as a whole fulfilled Christ's work on earth now not as separate from Him but in His strength through the Holy Ghost.¹³³ Irving viewed the church as embodying Christ's threefold offices as Prophet, Priest and King: prophetic, because it was given by the Spirit to the church to explain the prophetic Scriptures; priestly, because of its ministry of intercession; and kingly, because of its powers of binding and loosing. Yet there was a provisionality about the church's exercise of these prerogatives, since it pointed away from itself to their one true embodiment in Christ.¹³⁴

Secondly, the popular distinction between the visible and invisible church was viewed as wrongly applied. Tarbet explained that the invisible church was not on earth but in heaven, and that the church on earth was a visible organisation; while the perfecting of the church awaited the revelation of Christ as its Head at His return, it had to take a visibly-constituted form here on earth.¹³⁵ "What matters that the truth is contained in the letter of the Bible, if it be not ministered in the Spirit and found in a living form in the House of Christ? What matters its being in the Bible, if it be not in us?"¹³⁶

¹²⁷ H.W.J.Thiersch, *History of the Christian Church*, 53.

¹²⁸ W.W.Andrews (1810-97): Congregationalist minister in Connecticut; joined the Catholic Apostolic Church in 1849 after 17 years' deliberation; became an angel-evangelist, and a member of the Apostles' Council (S.J.Andrews, *William Watson Andrews*).

¹²⁹ W.W.Andrews, *The True Constitution of the Church, and its Restoration*, 9.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹³¹ Dalton, *Four Discourses*, 48.

¹³² W.W.Andrews, *True Constitution*, 64-5; cf. R.Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, V.77.8.

¹³³ W.W.Andrews, *True Constitution*, 19.

¹³⁴ H.C.Whitley, *Blinded Eagle: An Introduction to the Life and Teaching of Edward Irving*, 57, quoting Irving, *Preliminary Discourse*, 138.

¹³⁵ [W.Tarbet], *Christ and the Church*, 9.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

3.2.3. The church - the Spirit's dwelling place

The difference between Old and New Covenants lay in the church's union with the risen Christ and the Spirit's presence in the church.¹³⁷ Ironically, in view of Cardale's introduction of Tabernacle typology, Irving averred that "this gift of the Holy Ghost is that without which religion will go back to Moses".¹³⁸ The church was formed at Pentecost in consequence of the Spirit's descent, and quickened with Christ's life thereby.¹³⁹ Without the Spirit, the church could not exist: "It is possible to assemble a greater or a less number of baptized persons, to bind them skilfully together, and to call them churches; but these assemblies are no more the body of Christ than a mass of human bones ingeniously put together, constitute a man."¹⁴⁰

As A.J.Scott had explained, believers already lived in the dispensation of the Spirit, though this was a neglected truth: they needed His energising life in order to be the church, a body indwelt by God, in reality.¹⁴¹ The evidence of this indwelling would be the manifestation of spiritual gifts, and Irving defended the outbreak of charismatic manifestations by asking: "how shall the Lord show to us what he would have his church to be but by restoring to us the gift which was originally in his church? What can reconstitute this church but that which constituted it at first?"¹⁴² It was this desire to return to the church's primitive condition, along with the heightened sense of divine activity as supernatural breaking into the existing order, which created a climate in which the gifts could appear in 1830.¹⁴³

Prophetic light commanded that a 'demonstration model' was to be provided by the setting up of seven churches in London as a model of what the universal church should look like in the same way that the seven churches of Revelation 2-3 were often interpreted (by evangelicals as well as Irvingites) as typifying the history of the church between Christ's two advents.¹⁴⁴ Irving had foreshadowed this development in one of his last letters to his flock: "the Lord in His great grace towards London ... hath purposed for the good of the whole Church, to set therein a complete and perfect pattern

¹³⁷ [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.353.

¹³⁸ Irving, "The baptism of the Holy Ghost" (Sermon, 26th April 1832), *The Pulpit*, no.493 (30th April 1832), 206.

¹³⁹ [Cardale], *Readings*, 2.148.

¹⁴⁰ Carré, 74. Hooker viewed the Spirit as binding members to one another and to Christ as Head, and activating the whole as one body (V.56.1).

¹⁴¹ Newell, 72-3.

¹⁴² Harding, *Trial before London Presbytery*, 50.

¹⁴³ Froom, 3.656.

¹⁴⁴ "Great Testimony", §111; [R.M.Heath]?, "Teaching at Southwark on the History and Meaning of the Monthly Assembly of the Seven Churches in London", 2; E.Miller, *Irvingism*, 1.153; cf. [Cardale], *Notes of Lectures*; [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 31. For a Brethren example see Darby, "Seven Lectures on the Prophetical Addresses to the Seven Churches" (1852), *CW*, 5.256-332.

of what His Church should be, endowed with a fulness of the Holy Ghost".¹⁴⁵ In the same way, the restoration of the church's correct form and order in the Catholic Apostolic Church was intended as *part* of the catholic church and a centre for its union, God's purpose being that the light thus shed should be received throughout Christendom.¹⁴⁶

3.2.4. *The church's heavenly nature*

Like the Brethren, Catholic Apostolics believed the church to be heavenly in origin and nature; its connection with earth, and its establishment, was accidental and not of its essence. While formed *from* the earth, the church was not *of* the earth, and its true character would be seen when its earthly element was thrown off at Christ's return.¹⁴⁷ They contended that this had been lost sight of at the Reformation; in Irving's words:

Take up the writings of any of the Reformers, even such as Jewel or Hooker, and you find learning, wisdom, and sound divinity; but withal it hath respect to the earthly, rather than the heavenly, relations of the Church. Their knowledge is limited, their ideas few, and their discourses scanty, concerning the glory of Christ, and the glory which is to be brought to us at His appearing.¹⁴⁸

The church was spoken of as "the kingdom in a mystery", the spiritual phase or type of the kingdom to be openly established at Christ's return.¹⁴⁹ Between the first and second advents of Christ, the church was to gather an election from mankind; it was not to attempt to establish the kingdom now¹⁵⁰, but was "to show forth the form and order that exist in the kingdom"¹⁵¹, that men might be trained to occupy their places therein.¹⁵²

We have seen that Old Testament saints were excluded from the church by virtue of its being a fruit of the Incarnation. Yet this did not mean that there was no link between the church and Israel; it was the Jewish remnant who were seen as chosen to gather in the elect: "children of the former dispensation, they became the fathers of the new."¹⁵³ Andrews recalled that Pentecost was the anniversary of the giving of the Law at Sinai, and paralleled God's activity then in constituting Israel a kingdom of priests and a holy

¹⁴⁵ Wilks, 280.

¹⁴⁶ R.Norton, *The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets* (1854), 9; [Sitwell], *Purpose*, 164.

¹⁴⁷ Dalton, *What is the Church?* 14, 16.

¹⁴⁸ Irving, *PW*, 1.709.

¹⁴⁹ Dalton, *Four Discourses*, 32; [H.Drummond], ed., *Dialogues*, 1.227.

¹⁵⁰ [H.Drummond & N.Armstrong], *Tracts for the Church in 1856*, 19-20. This was a major reason for Catholic Apostolic opposition to papal claims, which they viewed as an attempt to anticipate God's purposes.

¹⁵¹ [Sitwell], *Purpose*, 29.

¹⁵² H.Drummond, *The Fate of Christendom*, 82.

¹⁵³ [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.30.

nation with His activity at Pentecost in establishing the ministration of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3.8): he described the church as the true Israel¹⁵⁴, while Thiersch referred to Israel as the earthly shadow of the heavenly church.¹⁵⁵ Like Darby, he believed that if the Jews had repented after Pentecost, the new order prophesied in the Old Testament would have appeared immediately.¹⁵⁶ The Jerusalem church was unique in being bound up with Israel, yet having the Spirit and His ordinances.¹⁵⁷

Catholic Apostolics shared the Brethren understanding of the church era as parenthetical: Irving was quoted as saying: "My idea is, that not the Old Testament, but the New Testament dispensation, hath an end; and then the other resumes its course under Christ and his bride, which is the church."¹⁵⁸ In terms reminiscent of Darby's writing, Drummond described the Gentile church as "a dispensation, a parenthesis, within the Jewish; the Church was set up between the day of Pentecost and the death of John, it fell away and, if it be not restored, it will want a restoration parallel to the restoration of the larger dispensation of the Jews, and of all mankind."¹⁵⁹

However, the distinction between the heavenly church and the earthly Israel so evident in Darby was less sharply drawn, partly because there was a more positive attitude to the world and so less impetus to disengage the church from it, and partly because Catholic Apostolics did not interpret prophecy in the same way: they did not share Darby's futurism, nor did they make the same rigid division between prophecy properly so-called, relating to earthly Israel, and scriptures which dealt with the future of the heavenly church.

3.2.5. *The church and the world*

According to Irving, "The Church is the parent of all bodies- political."¹⁶⁰ It was constituted as the channel for God's grace and blessing, and was to serve as the model for human society¹⁶¹, demonstrating Christ's rule in the world, a rule which man lost when he fell.¹⁶² In addition, the church represented the link between the invisible

¹⁵⁴ W.W.Andrews, *True Constitution*, 10. Compare this with the more traditional description of Israel as "the Jewish Church" used at the Albury conferences ([H.Drummond], ed., *Dialogues*, 3.180).

¹⁵⁵ Thiersch, 52.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 66.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 68.

¹⁵⁸ P.Fairbairn, *The Interpretation of Prophecy*, 158-9.

¹⁵⁹ Undated letter, quoted by R.S.Ward, 76.

¹⁶⁰ Irving to Chalmers, 1827, New College MSS.CHA.4.77.10.

¹⁶¹ [Sitwell], *Purpose*, 192.

¹⁶² Irving, *CW*, 5.449-50.

Christ and the visible world.¹⁶³ As Sitwell summarised it, "What Christ had been while on the earth, the Church was to be during His absence."¹⁶⁴

Catholic Apostolics, therefore, had a radically different approach from Brethren to the question of involvement with the world, since they believed that through the restored apostles God was calling earthly rulers to a renewed submission to Christ's rule. In the background was the belief derived from Hooker that church and state were two facets of one Christian society,¹⁶⁵ Irving also drew inspiration from the Scottish Calvinist understanding of church and state as two aspects of the same community, an identity which in Scotland had been eroded since the Union of 1707, although still widely taught.¹⁶⁶ Coleridge, too, had described the "Christian Church" as: "the sustaining, correcting, befriending opposite of the world; the compensating counterforce to the inherent and inevitable evils and defects of the State."¹⁶⁷ The *Convocation Book* of Bishop Overall (1560-1619) was another influence: reading it confirmed Irving's approval of hierarchicalism and his opposition to the notion that power derived from the people.¹⁶⁸

The proposed repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts thus represented a severe blow to Irving's position, as it opened the way for dissenters and unbelievers to hold public office and sit in Parliament, and he responded with *A Letter to the King on the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Laws, as it Affects our Christian Monarchy*. Irving denounced such action as signing away Britain's charter as a Christian kingdom¹⁶⁹, tracing the demand for repeal to the forces of infidelity under the name of liberalism.¹⁷⁰ However, he stressed that establishment was incidental to the church's true nature: it was the Christian religion being adopted by the state as the ground of law, government, and society.¹⁷¹ "It is not that the Christian Religion is patronized by the State; but that the Christian Religion is the ground and basis of the State."¹⁷²

Irving followed this up in 1829 with a major work, *The Church and State Responsible to Christ, and to One Another. A Series of Discourses on Daniel's Vision of the Four Beasts*. In it he sought to expound his view of the relationship between church and state

¹⁶³ Ibid., 5.454.

¹⁶⁴ [Sitwell], *Purpose*, 28.

¹⁶⁵ Edwards, 3.221; cf. J.S.Marshall, *Hooker and the Anglican Tradition: an historical and theological study of Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity*, 163, quoting Hooker, VIII.1.2-3.

¹⁶⁶ Drummond & Bulloch, 150.

¹⁶⁷ *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Vol.10, ed. J.Colmer, *On the Constitution of Church and State*, 138-9.

¹⁶⁸ Oliphant, 121, 139-40, quoting Irving's journal for 26th October and 2nd November 1825.

¹⁶⁹ Irving, *Letter to the King*, 4.

¹⁷⁰ J.C.D.Clark, 350, quoting Irving, *Letter to the King*, 30.

¹⁷¹ Irving, *Letter to the King*, 25.

¹⁷² Ibid., 23.

in a manner consonant with the Church of Scotland's doctrinal standards, quoting at length from the Scottish Confession of 1560, the Westminster Confession, and the First and Second Books of Discipline. He wrote with passion, deeply affected by what he saw as "the late great act of national apostasy".¹⁷³ Church and state both derived their authority from Christ and ruled by divine right.¹⁷⁴ "The state hath to do with all things which concern the visible; the church, with all things which concern the invisible."¹⁷⁵ Each was subject to the other in its realm, and the two were to be kept separate until united in Christ at His return; the necessity for this separation (and the reason why Irving opposed what he viewed as papal attempts to combine the two spheres of rule) arose out of the need for believers to attain holiness before they could attain power - a holiness which would only be perfected when Christ returned.¹⁷⁶ Yet separation did not mean that there should be no connection between church and state. On the contrary, if the state did not decide to establish a particular form of the Christian religion, the beauty and the advantage of this divided jurisdiction was lost¹⁷⁷: "like every other mystery of God, it is unity in distinctness."¹⁷⁸ In words clearly echoing Coleridge, he explained why: "There can be no such thing as complete separateness in any of the works of the one God, still less can there be any complete separateness in those functions which meet together and are united in Christ."¹⁷⁹ All who served the king were to be subject to Christ from whom he derived his power: to say that church and state had nothing to do with each other amounted to taking the authority of rulers out of God's jurisdiction, and implicitly assigning it to Satan's.¹⁸⁰

Like Hooker, Irving viewed the state church as having jurisdiction over all within its territory and disapproved of religious dissent.¹⁸¹ When there existed a national church set up according to Scripture, to set up another altar amounted to schism from the church and disloyalty to the king: "I hold it to be an act of schism, to go forth and separate from any church which is not of the Apostasy."¹⁸² He paralleled the sins of heresy or schism in the ecclesiastical sphere and rebellion in the state sphere, suggesting that schismatics should be deprived of political office, since "If they have broken the bonds of the church, they will break the bonds of the state also."¹⁸³

¹⁷³ E.Irving, *Church and State*, xiv.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 557.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 540.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 543-53.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 555.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 562.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 561.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 558.

¹⁸¹ Shaw, 12-3.

¹⁸² Irving, *Church and State*, 568; cf. Drummond, in R.S.Ward, 43.

¹⁸³ Irving, *Church and State*, 570.

The influence of Coleridge's ideas about polarity is evident in Irving: the concept of two opposing poles and their union in a triunity was at the root of Coleridge's thinking about God, but also his political thought¹⁸⁴, and his separation of church and state was thus not merely the recognition of changing political realities but a philosophical principle.¹⁸⁵ Church and state were the two poles, attracted to each other by the constitution of the nation.¹⁸⁶ Though distinct, church and state could not be separated since every citizen was a member of each.¹⁸⁷

However, we should not overlook the importance of the Calvinist tradition as a source for Irving's political thought: Calvin had taught that church and magistracy had complementary roles, each securing respect for God's law in its own domain. Ministers were to be involved in moral education and explain to the magistracy the Biblical requirements to which civil legislation should conform, while magistrates exercised rule on Christ's behalf, maintaining civil order and religious uniformity, protecting the church and promote respect for the preaching of the gospel.¹⁸⁸

A late change took place when Irving's experience of conflict with the Church of Scotland and the condemnation of his doctrines administered a profound shock to his thinking, evident in his response "A Judgment, as to what course the ministers and the People of the Church of Scotland should take in consequence of the Decisions of the Last General Assembly".¹⁸⁹ Seeing this body as part of the eschatological apostasy, he now proclaimed the church's primary unit to be the local gathered congregation, not the denomination¹⁹⁰, confirmation that his ecclesiology was shifting from an "establishment" perspective to a "remnant" one - in practice, at least. Establishment would only come after Christ's return.¹⁹¹

The definitive statement of Catholic Apostolic social teaching was the "Great Testimony", addressed:

To the Patriarchs, Archbishops, Bishops and others in places of chief rule over the Church of Christ throughout the earth,
and to the Emperors, Kings, Sovereign Princes, and Chief Governors over the nations of the baptized.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁴ O.Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 145.

¹⁸⁵ J.Colmer, in Coleridge, *Works*, 10.xxiv-xxv.

¹⁸⁶ Barfield, 259.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹⁸⁸ George, 245; F.Wendel, *Calvin: the origins and development of his religious thought*, 309.

¹⁸⁹ *MW* 5 (1832): 84-115; later published separately (references are to the latter edition).

¹⁹⁰ Irving, "Judgment", 24.

¹⁹¹ Oliver, 112.

¹⁹² "Great Testimony", superscription.

It took up Irving's idea of Christian nations as being in covenant with God, setting out the functions of church and state in terms reminiscent of his teaching:

The office of the priesthood is to teach both kings and people their several duties, and to be channels for imparting to all and each the grace and blessing, without which they are unfurnished for discharging the same. ... The duty of kings and rulers is to govern their people by the statutes and ordinances of God, which, in faith of Him, not of man, they receive from the lips of the priests;- as chief among the sons, to be the most obedient to the Church, from whose womb all the baptized are born unto God, and from whose breasts they are nourished; and to guard and shield her from every danger with filial care. Over the persons of all in their dominions they are to rule in righteousness; but dominion or jurisdiction in faith - authority internal or external in the Church - belongs not to them, and is an usurpation of the office of Christ, the true Melchisedec, who alone is both King of kings, and Priest of the most High God.¹⁹³

There was a clear separation of the roles of king and priest, yet without denying the responsibility of each to Christ: the apostles opposed Roman Catholicism so strongly because they held it guilty of attempting in the institution of the papacy to combine these roles in a way which amounted to usurping Christ's unique status as King and Priest.

In similar vein, the Testimony to William IV viewed rule as stewardship on God's behalf; the church was to instruct the state as to how to obey God, and although it was not to usurp temporal authority, it was to be provided for by the state. Conversely, the state was to refrain from interfering in church affairs.¹⁹⁴ It was the church's responsibility to testify to the rulers about the nation's condition¹⁹⁵, hence the Catholic Apostolic practice of discharging their obligation to spread the message of Christ's imminent return by issuing Testimonies to the heads of church and state. Even the generally negative response which they received did not lead them to alter their approach.

The most influential exponent of the movement's teaching regarding the relationship between the church and the world was Henry Drummond. Possibly the wealthiest man in contemporary England, he founded and endowed a chair of Political Economy at Oxford in 1825¹⁹⁶, and wrote many works in that field. Three in particular are relevant here, *A Letter to the King against the Repeal of the Test Act* (1829)¹⁹⁷, *The Fate of Christendom* (1854) and *A Letter to Mr. Bright on his Plan for Turning the English Monarchy into a Democracy* (1858).

¹⁹³ Ibid., §72.

¹⁹⁴ "Testimony to William IV", in E. Miller, *Irvingism*, 2.366.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 2.370.

¹⁹⁶ G.V. Cox, *Recollections of Oxford*, 108.

¹⁹⁷ H. Drummond, *Speeches*, 1.39-59.

Fundamental to his political thought as well as his ecclesiology was the belief in order; order in nature was seen as expressing eternal truths essential for human happiness.¹⁹⁸ God worked on earth through visible means or "ordinances" which He had established; order thus entailed some form of God-ordained hierarchy, through which blessing flowed down to all: "The divine right which God confers upon sovereigns, husbands, fathers and masters, is to make them to be the instruments in His hands for conveying His blessings to those below them."¹⁹⁹ Evil was anything which threw that order out of line²⁰⁰ or any abuse of one's position within it.

The church's order was to serve as a model for government after the destruction of the Roman Empire, and the church still had a role to play as the earthly representation of the heavenly order.²⁰¹

The Church is the only living instrument by which is revealed "the constitution of society as designed by God." It is her business to show His method of carrying on the government of His intelligent creatures, both in heaven and on earth, in order to insure their happiness. This method is through order and suborder, in the Heavenly Host first and amongst men also.²⁰²

In spite of its faults, Drummond considered the British system of government, in the state as in the church, to be the nearest approximation to the divine ideal²⁰³: he paralleled the hierarchies of church and state: there was the bishop (the monarch), priests elected by the bishop but thereafter independent (the Lords, independent of the crown and of the people), and deacons elected by the people (the Commons).²⁰⁴

He therefore opposed projected reforms which could lead to disestablishment, such as repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts: since these were based on the idea of the unity of church and nation, repeal would imply the separation of church and state and the state's repudiation of its Godward obligations, as well as implying that power came from the people rather than from God.²⁰⁵ Responding to the radical reformer John Bright, he explained why he took this line:

It is the duty of every man to worship God; it is the duty of every family as one body to worship God; it is the duty of every nation as one community to worship God. The nation as one can only do this by established laws and regulations. To pull down the Established Church is an act of the nation saying, "I will never pray to, nor serve, nor worship God again." I have no doubt, however, that you

¹⁹⁸ H.Drummond, *Letter to Bright*, 37; for the importance of order in Calvin and Hooker, see J.H.Leith, *An Introduction to the Reformed Tradition: A Way of Being the Christian Community*, 137; L.S.Thornton, *Richard Hooker: A Study of his theology*, 41-4.

¹⁹⁹ H.Drummond, *Fate*, 6-7.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁰² H.Drummond, *Letter to Bright*, 37.

²⁰³ H.Drummond, *Fate*, 66-7; cf. [Sitwell], *Purpose*, 192-3.

²⁰⁴ H.Drummond, *Fate*, 9; cf. *idem*, *Letter to Bright*, 6-7 (following Hooker, Book I).

²⁰⁵ H.Drummond, *Speeches*, 1.42-3.

will succeed shortly in your endeavours; neither have I any doubt that God will destroy this nation for following your counsels.²⁰⁶

Such judgment was inevitable because England, like its Biblical type, Tyre, had become proud and failed to recognise God as the source of its blessings.²⁰⁷ Oliver highlights Drummond's belief in the idea of Britain as apostate nation, putting the institutions of man in the place of those given by God, liberty and equality in place of authority and hierarchy. Such a process would lead to increasing individualism and disorder, with their consequences of infidelity and liberalism.²⁰⁸ Apostasy, of course, presupposed the covenant relationship outlined in the Testimonies: "we are in covenant with God; and it is a much stronger act of rebellion to renounce that covenant and break that bond in which we find ourselves, than never to have come into that covenant at all."²⁰⁹ The restoration of order under apostles and prophets (and a renewed recognition of the church's heavenly calling) thus formed a vital part of the Spirit's contemporary work. Even here, however, disorder could arise as evil gained entrance through those who spoke in prophetic power but were heedless of social ordinances.²¹⁰

Paralleling the decline of church and state, Drummond equated Roman Catholicism (Christianity corrupted) with the European monarchies (Christ's order of government corrupted), and Protestantism (Christianity mutilated or diluted) with Republicanism (Christ's order of government despised).²¹¹ Like Irving, he was ambivalent in his view of Rome: he wrote several anti-Roman works, and considered that admission of papists to government would force God to withdraw the protection which had preserved Britain from the effects of the French Revolution.²¹² Yet before his conversion he had supported the cause of emancipation in Parliament²¹³ and in 1840 he wrote: "I feel persuaded that the regeneration of the Church can never come out of Protestantism and that it can only come out of Popery."²¹⁴ An obituary described him as "the champion of essentially Roman Catholic doctrine, and yet ... the fierce antagonist of Papal supremacy".²¹⁵

Drummond saw the movement for democracy as tantamount to religious apostasy, going in the face of the Biblical teaching that power was from God: the church had only itself

²⁰⁶ H.Drummond, *Letter to Bright*, 8; cf. Irving's expectation that Britain would be overthrown by a republican uprising (*Babylon and Infidelity*, 293, 553).

²⁰⁷ H.Drummond, *Fate*, 96.

²⁰⁸ Oliver, 108-9, following [H.Drummond], *Social Duties on Christian Principles*, 160-1.

²⁰⁹ H.Drummond, *Speeches*, 1.51.

²¹⁰ Letter of 21st January 1834, in R.S.Ward, 44.

²¹¹ H.Drummond, *Fate*, 79.

²¹² H.Drummond, *Speeches*, 1.54.

²¹³ J.R.Wolffe, *The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain, 1829-1860*, 43.

²¹⁴ R.S.Ward, 57.

²¹⁵ E.Miller, *Irvingism*, 1.33, quoting the *Morning Star*.

to blame for its situation, since it had failed to teach this.²¹⁶ He challenged the expectation (often couched in Biblical terms) of a golden age, by accusing optimists of forgetting that Scripture also spoke of coming judgment²¹⁷; the faithful remnant must therefore leave Babylon²¹⁸, although he never interpreted this as implying that believers must withdraw from either church or state institutions, and remained active in public life until his death. From his perspective, "The question is summed up in a few words, - Do Truth, Wisdom, Justice, Mercy, descend from God to instruct man, or do they rise up to instruct God out of the bottomless pit of the disorganized mass of His creatures?"²¹⁹ In spite of the best efforts of the apostles and those under them, the vast majority of their compatriots believed the latter, and their movement made little impact outside the Tory social circles from which its leaders came.

Other Catholic Apostolics had plenty to say about order in church and society, as had Hooker²²⁰, and as did Evangelicals and others during this period.²²¹ Order was essential for the health of church and state: "there can be no real, vigorous life without form and order. All nature testifies to this. Would that all our brethren could see it!"²²² Earthly hierarchies served to prepare believers to take their places in the hierarchy to be brought in when Christ returned.²²³ Parallels were often drawn between the family and the church, the family being described as "the nursery of the church"²²⁴; many works appeared on the subject of family life. Tarbet pointed out that the New Testament term *ταξιν* (order) had military connotations, implying the idea of subordination; each member of the body, whether that body be family, state, or church, had their position assigned by God in Scripture.²²⁵ Subordination to God was expressed in subordination to His visible ordinances. Thus their main complaint against the Evangelical revival was that it had not led to a restoration of correct church order.²²⁶ Religious or philanthropic societies were also suspect because they bypassed the God-ordained ordinances in church and state, and became unwitting instruments of evil as they encouraged insubordination and pride in lay leaders, who by their involvement stepped out of the positions assigned to them by God.²²⁷

²¹⁶ H.Drummond, *Letter to Bright*, 7-8, 41.

²¹⁷ H.Drummond, *Fate*, 71.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 72-3.

²¹⁹ H.Drummond, *Letter to Bright*, 37-8.

²²⁰ Thornton, 26-7, following Hooker, Book I.

²²¹ K.Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action*, 18.

²²² [W.Tarbet], *Order in the Family and in the Church*, 7.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 8.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ "Great Testimony", §83.

²²⁷ Tierney, "Catholic Apostolic Church", 308. Yet Irving had described societies as "the greatest blessing God has given to men" (Sermon, 15th October 1830, 461, in British Library file 764h10).

3.2.6. Prophetic utterance - a distinctive source for typology

In spite of its belief that it represented the restoration of God's pattern for the church, and its emphasis on the necessity of order, "the Lord's Work" did not start with a fixed idea of the right constitution of the church from which it never deviated, but developed and changed as it learned from experience. "Prophetic light", informed by prior study of the Scriptures and the customs of other branches of Christendom, was a major source; expressions such as "it was shown by the light of prophecy" often occurred in the context of discussions of church order, and we have seen how prophecy played a decisive role in the calling of the apostles.

Prophecy did not only influence the course of events, however; it played a distinctive and creative role in the application of Scripture to questions of church constitution and order. In 1833 Cardale dictated "in the Spirit" *The Mystery of the Golden Candlestick*, based on the regulations in Exodus 25.31-40 and the identification of the seven churches with the seven candlesticks in Revelation 1.20. It is the clearest example of the way in which typology and prophecy combined to produce a distinctive understanding of the church's constitution and order. As Woodhouse explained:

In this revelation the Holy Ghost, taking the type or shadow under the Law of the golden candlestick in the Tabernacle ..., shewed the Angel and six Elders to be therein represented as the lights of the candlestick; and in all the different parts thereof, even to the most minute particulars of the Mosaic account, shewed how the order of a church properly constituted, with an Angel, Elders, Deacons, &c. was therein symbolized.²²⁸

Not long afterwards, it was prophetic light on Ezekiel 1 delivered by the apostles during their year at Albury which formed the basis for their doctrine of the fourfold ministry.²²⁹ Such application of typology to ecclesiology was something new. The Tractarians, influenced by the Romantic rediscovery of the symbolic and imaginative character of language, were attracted by the typological exegesis of the early fathers as witnessing to the reserve and mystery which marked the Christian faith and engendered due reverence, by contrast with the eighteenth-century emphasis on "evidence theology".²³⁰ However, they did not apply types to the church in this way. A thoroughgoing typological interpretation of Scripture was not uncommon among Evangelicals before the rise of "higher criticism", though they were usually careful to avoid unrestrained allegorising; participants in the Albury conferences considered typology useful for illustrating or confirming truths deduced from other parts of Scripture.²³¹ However, Catholic Apostolics departed from Evangelicalism in seeing

²²⁸ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 23.

²²⁹ [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.149.

²³⁰ Rowell, 9-10, 12.

²³¹ [H.Drummond], ed., *Dialogues*, 3.184.

types in the Old Testament not only of Christ but of the church, "Chrst mystical"²³², being directed by prophecy to typology as a source for church order and constitution: "The Spirit of Christ speaking through prophets in these last days has shown ... that the forms of worship prescribed of old to the Jews, present the true method in which God must ever be approached by His fallen and redeemed creatures."²³³ It was prophetic light given to the apostles between 1836 and 1849 which apparently provided the basis for Cardale's authoritative exposition of the types of the Law in *Readings upon the Liturgy*.²³⁴ In Horton Davies' opinion, "however much Irving was given to allegorical exegesis of the Old Testament, he far more than met his match in Cardale ..." The major example of Catholic Apostolic ecclesiological typology was that of the Mosaic Tabernacle, which was seen as minutely prefiguring God's intended order for the Church on earth. The chief texts used were Exodus 25.9, 26.30, 27.8, Acts 7.44, Ephesians 4.12-16, 1 Timothy 3.15, Hebrews 8.5 and 1 Peter 2.5.²³⁵ These were interpreted as teaching that the church was an organised body being built according to plan, just as the Tabernacle was built according to a heavenly pattern shown to Moses. Aware of Evangelical opposition to such an ecclesiology, Drummond asserted that:

... God only once presented the forms in which He would be worshipped, and that it was through a magnificent building and a gorgeous ritual, with lights, incense and vestments; and that "He is a God who changes not:" and that to have told His creature man once the way how to worship Him was sufficient, until He told him with equal clearness to alter the mode of his worship. The Christian dispensation changed the form but did not alter the substance ...²³⁶

However, care was taken to explain that the Tabernacle prefigured the church, rather than the church being deliberately patterned upon the Tabernacle: "the Church, if not the essence, is yet the living image of the heavenly things of which the Tabernacle was only the shadow (Heb.x.1)."²³⁷

Since Christ had only one way of doing His Father's will, and since He accomplished through the church on earth what He performed in heaven, it followed that the church must have one correct constitution, government, and order of worship.²³⁸ Catholic Apostolics sought to realise this, although they later emphasised that their order was provisional: Cardale denied making claims to perfection or plenary inspiration for

²³² [W.Tarbet], *The Shadows of the Law: The Realities of the Body of Christ*, 23. Norton provided a useful exposition (*Restoration* (1861), 137-44).

²³³ H.Drummond, *The Rationale of Liturgies and of Public Worship*, 4.

²³⁴ E.Heath, "Paper on the Danger of Regarding as Definite Dogmatic Statements things concerning the coming of the Lord, which God has revealed in part by prophecy", 1; cf. [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.44, 53, 548-9 for references to prophecy's role in determining interpretation of the types of the Law.

²³⁵ H.Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, 4.157.

²³⁶ H.Drummond, *Fate*, 87-8.

²³⁷ [T.Carlyle], *The Mosaic Tabernacle*, 38; cf. [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.350, 423; [Tarbet], *Shadows*, 72.

²³⁸ [Carlyle], *Mosaic Tabernacle*, 12.

their order as patterned on the Tabernacle; the church was still developing and still imperfect, although its development was in line with God's purpose.²³⁹ Drummond explained that the perfect structure which had been revealed to them spanned the whole Christian era and comprised all the elect between Pentecost and the Second Advent: contrary to the expectations of many in the movement, it would only be seen in completeness on earth after the resurrection of believers, not in any one generation in history.²⁴⁰

According to Woodhouse, Catholic Apostolics were not the first to conclude that the regulations concerning the Tabernacle were intended to prefigure church order, but they were the first to ~~correctly~~^{correctly} understand them.

... the parts of the tabernacle, and the uses to which they subserve, even in their minutest details, throw light upon the duties and offices of the ministries and memberships in the Church, the body of Christ, in a way and with a clearness quite inconceivable to those who have not come under the teaching of the Spirit - who have been without the ministry of Apostles and Prophets.

Most commentators on the Pentateuch ... have concluded that the order of the tabernacle typified the order of the Christian Church, and some have even attempted to discover the hidden meaning of its figures; but the vanity of such endeavours, without the light of prophecy and the judgment of Apostles, is apparent beforehand, from their want of any practical results; and is much more apparent now that, through these two offices revived in the Church, the mystery revealed to Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit is being brought out in living men, built up a spiritual house ...²⁴¹

These types proved capable of several complementary interpretations, the three divisions of the Tabernacle being variously seen as typifying human nature (as animal, intellectual and spiritual), the dispensations (the Jewish, the church on earth, the church after the resurrection), the relative positions of the nations, Israel and the church in the millennium, as well as the three orders of ministry (apostles, priests and deacons).²⁴²

Carlyle explained that such details were not found in the New Testament because the church was not in a condition to receive them: he understood Hebrews 5.11 and 9.5 as implying that there was more to Tabernacle typology than the recipients of that letter knew, which was now made known fully as a result of the restoration of apostles.²⁴³ However, confirmation that the Catholic Apostolic understanding of typology was given by the Holy Ghost was seen in its perceived closeness to early church practice.

²³⁹ [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.17-8.

²⁴⁰ R.S.Ward, 74, quoting E.Miller, *Irvingism*, 1.156; cf. H.Drummond, *Abstract Principles of Revealed Religion*, 302.

²⁴¹ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 41-2; cf. [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.355-6; [Sitwell], *Purpose*, 203.

²⁴² [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.243-6, 255-6.

²⁴³ [Carlyle], *Mosaic Tabernacle*, 13-4.

The danger with such an exalted view of their ecclesial structures was that members could forget that there was anything to look forward to beyond their completion. The movement's evangelists were reminded in 1854 of the risk that members would look for the perfect form instead of the power of God, and thus fall prey to idolatry: the Tabernacle was an illustration, not the foundation; Christ, not the Tabernacle, was what would remain.²⁴⁴ "The repetition of the form of the tabernacle which God shewed us was adapted to the condition of His spiritual Israel, who had fallen back into a carnal condition."²⁴⁵ The idea of the Tabernacle had to be balanced with that of the Temple, as Carlyle explained: "The tabernacle typified the Church militant, the temple the Church triumphant."²⁴⁶ Again, this approach was anticipated by Irving: "the former representeth the present state of the Church, unfixed and unsettled, and of frail materials composed; the latter, the future state of the Church, as it shall be after the resurrection, fixed and glorious for ever."²⁴⁷ This distinction was not unique to Catholic Apostolics: Darby described believers in this dispensation as being the Tabernacle where God dwelt, and looked forward to their becoming the Temple after the Parousia.²⁴⁸

Catholic Apostolic writers were not concerned merely to look back to a past golden age or forward to a future one: they were deeply burdened about the present state of the divided and ruined body of Christ, to which, in spite of their estimate of its condition, they acknowledged a great debt. As Woodhouse put it:

The light which we have received, the truth which we have embodied in practice, the ordinances and forms of worship which are in use among us, - all these things are not of us, and were not in us; they are of the Church, they are in the Church, and are only gathered into one among us, while lying scattered among the disjointed portions and fragmentary ruins of the broken disunited body ...²⁴⁹

It was prophecy and typology, as interpreted by apostles, which gave them the means for building the fragments gathered from others into a coherent whole.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁴ W.H.Place, *Notes of Teaching to Evangelists*, 5-6, 8. Wigram charged Irvingites with focusing on the church's original form at the expense of the principle according to which it was constituted and which gave rise to that form ("Verity of Revival", 179).

²⁴⁵ Place, *Teaching to Evangelists*, 10.

²⁴⁶ Translator's footnote in Thersch, 179; cf. [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.206; [Carlyle], *Mosaic Tabernacle*, 11; [Tarbet], *Shadows*, 53-4.

²⁴⁷ Irving, *PW*, 2.95.

²⁴⁸ Darby, *CW*, 27.22, commenting on Eph.2.22.

²⁴⁹ [F.V.Woodhouse], *The Census and the Catholic Apostolic Church*, 15.

²⁵⁰ Prophecy was not accorded absolute authority, but was subordinated to apostolic discernment. Taplin, as Pillar of Prophets, was responsible for many typological expositions of Scripture on eschatological themes, exercising considerable influence until his death in 1862, but does not seem to have exercised so much influence in the realm of ecclesiology. This may be because of his past record: Miller described a false start made in this direction in 1834 by Irving and Taplin and condemned by Cardale (*Irvingism*, 1.141-2).

3.3. Assessment

Brethren (insofar as they followed Darby's thinking) and Catholic Apostolics evidently shared a high doctrine of the church, as did the Reformed tradition in which some of their roots lay. Indeed, both movements saw themselves as seeking to restore ecclesiology to its proper place from the relative neglect into which it had fallen among evangelicals. Both movements agreed in emphasising the church's heavenly nature as the body of Christ constituted by the Spirit at Pentecost, and its consequent independence of earthly authorities. In line with the radical Calvinist emphasis on divine sovereignty and action in the church, Brethren and Catholic Apostolics stressed that it gained its members through divine action - for the Brethren, in gathering, and for Catholic Apostolics, in baptism.

Yet Darby and Catholic Apostolics departed from Reformed ecclesiology in emphasising the discontinuity of the church and Israel²⁵¹, and restricting the church in every sense to those gathered between Pentecost and the Parousia.²⁵² Neither seem to have reckoned seriously with the Reformed view that saints of both dispensations were united in the one people of God. Darby and the Albury circle both spoke of the church age as parenthetical between past and future Jewish establishments; some have suggested that Darby derived this concept from Irving²⁵³, although this cannot be made to stick, since it was common at this time to divide history into a series of dispensations.²⁵⁴ It is reasonable to suppose from its roughly contemporaneous use by Darby, Drummond, Irving, and Tudor in the *Morning Watch* that it was part of the stock-in-trade of prophetic terminology upon which they drew.

Curiously, while Catholic Apostolics came to the same conclusion as Darby concerning the relation of Old Testament believers to the church, and the impossibility of the church being formed until the Spirit could be sent down to testify to, and unite believers with, the exalted Christ, they did so by a different route; whereas Darby viewed the church as the fruit of the Ascension (thus opening himself to the charge of ecclesiastical docetism), Catholic Apostolics preferred to view it as a fruit (and even continuation) of the Incarnation. The difference may relate to their differing attitudes towards the world, compared below.

Both Darby and Irving show evidence of tension in their thinking between gathered and territorial ecclesiology. Darby gave considerable weight to the concept of Christendom and the position of responsibility in which the professing (and territorial) church was

²⁵¹ By contrast, prophecy among the Port-Glasgow group maintained that the church inherited the promises made to Israel; see section 2.3.2.

²⁵² Newton remained faithful to Reformed thinking in this respect.

²⁵³ E.g. Murray, 201.

²⁵⁴ Sandeen, 68-9.

placed in this dispensation. While he adopted an ecclesiology which could be described as a gathered one, he combined this with belief in the position of responsibility held by the whole professing church, worldly though it was. The tension was resolved by the doctrine of the church's ruin which resulted from his particular brand of dispensational interpretation, influenced by Calvinistic soteriology.

In Irving's thought there was a tension between the territorial ecclesiology derived from Hooker and Coleridge, which manifested itself in his political thought, and the remnant ecclesiology derived from the Albury circle and reinforced by his own experience of condemnation by the Church of Scotland, which manifested itself in his thought concerning ministry and spiritual gifts. This was resolved firstly by affirming (as did Calvin and the Reformed tradition) the calling of society to submit to Christ's Lordship as proclaimed by the church, but recognising that in practice it had not done so because the church had failed in its task of proclamation, and secondly by shifting the realisation of the ideal to a period after the Parousia. Such a tension led to a continuing ambiguity in Catholic Apostolic attitudes to the rest of Christendom. It would seem, therefore, that Catholic Apostolics did not hold to a gathered concept of the church, although in practice their movement functioned as such.²⁵⁵

We have said that the two movements differed in their attitudes towards the world: it is unlikely that differences in eschatology account completely for this. Bass's contention that the concept of the church's imminent rapture from this world was part of the reason for Brethren lack of interest in social issues is therefore to be rejected.²⁵⁶ The Catholic Apostolic Church had a similar concept as part of their hope, yet they had a great deal to say, not only about the society of their day, but also about the earth's future as the sphere where the redeemed would dwell who were not part of the 144,000 "firstfruits". They looked for Christ's return to establish the social order as given by God, whereas Brethren looked for it to overthrow the social order as something in hopeless rebellion against God. Although both believed the teaching of Romans 13 concerning the state as a divinely-ordained institution, Brethren seem to have focussed more on the world as the beast of Revelation 13; like the church, the state was irreparably ruined and it was pointless to attempt to restore it or to restrain evil by accepting office within it. Thus Catholic Apostolics remained in positions of influence while Brethren gave them up, both because they believed that by so doing they were preparing for the return of Christ. Catholic Apostolics saw involvement in society as part of their duty to God, recalling it to the pattern shown from heaven, while Brethren saw it as apostasy, losing sight of heaven for the things of earth. Yet although Irving had served as assistant to Chalmers, the Catholic Apostolic Church was notable for its negative view of attempts at social improvement which bypassed God's

²⁵⁵ Lancaster, 100, holds that it really was a gathered church.

²⁵⁶ Bass, 148.

order, and it nearly went the same way as the Brethren, as demonstrated by the Albury circle's pessimism, Baxter's prophecies and Irving's late change of opinion in response to events in church and state. That Catholic Apostolics did not ultimately follow Brethren in withdrawing from involvement in the world must have been due in part to Drummond's teaching (which was essentially similar to Irving's earlier views) and example. Perhaps, too, there was some lessening of the expectation of the rapture as imminent which had been evident in the movement's early years. However, a major factor must have been their emphasis upon the necessity of the Incarnation, which would have opened the way for a legitimation of the physical order as the sphere in which they were called to obey God.

4. THE RUIN OF THE CHURCH

As striking as the parallels of much Brethren and Catholic Apostolic thought on the church's nature and constitution, are the similarities of their views on its ruined state and the grounds which they adduced for their convictions. While other Calvinist seceding groups took similar action to Darby and Newton on the one hand and Irving and Baxter on the other, none produced such extensive theological justification for their practice, and so the ecclesiological writings of these two movements are of significance for modern ecumenists.

4.1. Brethren

4.1.1. *Roots of their doctrine of the church's ruin*

Darby's doctrine of the church's ruin was widely influential among Brethren of all descriptions. However, untangling its roots is a complex operation, involving his personal experience, his high-church ecclesiology, his distinction between heavenly and earthly, his Calvinist soteriology, his developing eschatology, and his experience in ministry. His heavenly-earthly distinction and the view of the church which went with it seem (under the influence of his Calvinist soteriology) to have given rise to his novel application of dispensational hermeneutic¹, producing a belief in the church's ruin.

Darby's belief that the church was irreparably ruined was thus partly rooted in his belief in the inevitable failure of every human dispensation.² His view that each dispensation was doomed to failure may be seen as an application of radical Calvinist soteriology, and in particular of the doctrines of divine sovereignty, original sin and human inability, to the realms of salvation-history and ecclesiology, a point which has not hitherto been recognised. Support for this reading of Darby comes from his belief that Israel's history was that of the individual³, and the individual's salvation-history was that of the church. Human failure meant that God must intervene, in history as in the individual, if his purpose was to be realised.⁴ Believers were unable to do anything about the church's ruined state. This radical Calvinism, visible also in an emphasis on the Spirit's enabling work, was not unique to Darby and his followers, being seen in Irving and some of the Albury circle as well as other evangelical seceders, but Darby appears to have been unique in believing that God did not purpose to restore the church.

¹ For Bass, "dispensationalism is rooted in Darby's concept of the church." (*Backgrounds*, 127)

² Cf. J.P.Ward, Abstract.

³ Darby, *CW*, 2.349, cf. 354.

⁴ Elmore, 79-80.

The Open Brethren appeared to come to different conclusions. Where they did so, it was primarily because they were less influenced by Darby's dispensationalist framework, but also because by and large they did not share his high-church background and thus tended to emphasis the local rather than the universal aspect of the church. They were also less influenced by the events in Ireland and Switzerland which shaped his thought. However, the difference between them and Darby may also be more apparent than real, because of their emphasis on the local aspect of the church, which sat easily with a belief in the ruin of its universal aspect.

The Calvinistic tenor of Darby's theology may have been derived from John Walker. Although Darby was not converted until after Walker left Dublin, and his sympathies then lay in the direction of high-church theology, he could have investigated Walker's teaching in published form or *via* the Walkerite meeting in Dublin after his "deliverance". However, there is no evidence that he did so. A more likely source may have been Thomas Scott, who had been involved in Anglican debates over Calvinist theology in the 1810s⁵, and whose writings influenced Darby in particular and Irish clergy in general.⁶ However, Scott rejected the manner in which Calvinism was often preached by contemporary evangelicals, which he considered amounted to antinomianism, and would not have sympathised with the radical Calvinism emerging in the 1820s; furthermore, there does not appear to be any evidence that he regarded the church as ruined. It seems, therefore, that Scott's influence on Darby's ecclesiology was indirect, amounting to a freeing of the Scriptures from ecclesiastical authority - a necessary pre-condition for Darby's formulation of his doctrine of ruin.

The other indication of Darby's sources appears in a letter from Tregelles to Newton in 1857: Tregelles stated that Darby had studied the prophetic writings of Lambert and Agier before seceding, followed by those of Olshausen, who placed the church in this dispensation on higher ground than the people of God before and after.⁷ Agier was a French Jansenist and translator of Lacunza's *Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty*; he located the seat of the Beast in Christian Rome.⁸ Lambert was a French Dominican who taught that the mystery of iniquity was a principle of perversion and corruption which had permeated the church since its earliest days and which would culminate in the apostasy, headed by a personal and papal Antichrist.⁹ Although it is hard to quantify the extent of such influences, we know that Irish Brethrenism was in measure a response to the prevalence of Roman Catholicism (Darby wrote a number of anti-Roman works), and Darby's early attraction to Rome seems to have left

⁵ Nockles, 229.

⁶ Brooke, 90.

⁷ S.P.Tregelles to B.W.Newton, 29th January 1857 (CBA7181(7)).

⁸ Fromm, 3.482-5.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.324-6; Catholic Apostolics also acknowledged Lambert as a source (Albrecht, *Work by Apostles*, 4; Copinger, "Annals", 2-3).

permanent marks on his ecclesiology and eschatology: his doctrine of ruin may be one more such instance.

Darby began his distinctive application of Calvinist doctrine early: Newton recalled that "Newman also gave me Darby's book on the Fall of the Church ..." ¹⁰ Elsewhere he explained that: "The only person who had any apprehension of all this ruin was Darby; and I felt it so too, that was why I so clung to him - He seemed to realise the general breakdown of the whole scene around us." ¹¹ Darby recalled that consciousness of the ruin began to dawn when, "Some years after the conversion of my soul I looked around to find where the church was, but I could not find it. I could find plenty of saints better than myself, but not the church as it was set up with power on the earth." ¹² This probably occurred after, and as a result of, his "deliverance" from a personal sense of ruin, which included a recognition of the church's true nature as heavenly and as including all true believers in Christ.

Darby's awareness of the ruin came only gradually; on the basis of Newton's recollections Huebner concludes that by 1827 Darby had some understanding of the church as irreparably ruined ¹³, and suggests that Darby's ecclesiology developed in tandem with his eschatology. ¹⁴ However, he has not traced any *development* of Darby's views on the church's ruin. Furthermore, whilst he understands Newton to be referring to an unpublished work by Darby, it seems more likely that the work in question was "Considerations on the Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ", and it is going beyond the evidence to say that this portrayed the ruin as irreparable. ¹⁵

A colleague's interpretation of Revelation 2-3 seems to have sharpened Darby's growing apprehension of the ruin in 1833:

Hardman, a dear brother in the Lord, a clergyman, was here lately, and he was speaking at large on the Seven Churches. I was not here, but this ground I hear he took. Sardis, the Reformation, on which, "if therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know," etc. Philadelphia, the separation of little bodies of believers with a little strength (there is comfort in that), but the Lord on their side, "I will keep them from," etc. "Behold I come quickly, hold fast that which thou hast," etc. And then the church left in its Laodicean state, its state generally now, at which He stands at the door and knocks - there being still some remaining perhaps amongst them, but He is at the door. What do you say to this? The result to the Laodicean church is to be spued out of

¹⁰ Huebner, *Precious Truths*, 1.18, quoting "Fry MS", 235.

¹¹ "Fry MS", 243.

¹² [Darby], *Miscellaneous Writings*, 4.164 (written in 1847); cf. [idem], *Letters*, 3.353 (1855), where he described his reading of Acts during his convalescence as showing him the contrast between the early church and the contemporary situation.

¹³ Huebner, *Precious Truths*, 1.18.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.65.

¹⁵ E.Cross to the author, 28th July 1993. This work did not appear until 1828, and Newman did not return to Oxford from Dublin until Autumn 1828; Newton dated Newman's gift of Darby's book to 1827, but his memory must have been faulty.

His mouth. It is an important consideration in the present state of things. It commends itself morally to one's mind.¹⁶

The amount of space Darby gave to recounting a sermon at which he was not even present implies that its leading ideas made a considerable impact on him, which may explain why he continued to interpret Revelation 2-3 in a historicist manner after becoming a futurist in the rest of his eschatology.¹⁷ Already the desirable state for believers to seek was that of a small body of the faithful, in contrast to the generally Laodicean state of the contemporary church. The separatist impulse was clear, and the call to other believers to separate from the church in view of its rejection and imminent judgment was implicit. Since, as a high-churchman, Darby could never have accepted the formation of another church, the development of his eschatology to the point where it precluded any possibility of renewal of the established churches before the return of Christ¹⁸ would also have made inevitable the appearance of his doctrine of ruin, especially when circumstances combined to give force to his pessimistic estimate of the contemporary situation. The change can be seen from a comparison of the two editions of his article "On the Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ".¹⁹ Yet Darby did not appear at this stage to believe in the church's *total and irreparable* ruin, for he went on in the letter quoted above to speak of awakened clergy in Ireland "making churches, not with communion, but admitting all Christians ..." ²⁰

Plymouth had altered the face of Christianity for Darby, but the growing gap between his and Newton's eschatological convictions was evident by 1834, a year which probably also marked his final separation from Anglicanism. Events thus provided two stimuli to his accepting that ruin was irreparable; others may have been provided by three articles in the *Christian Witness*. The first²¹ doubted that revival of the church from its apostasy was promised to Christians, or that God intended to mend what man had marred.²² This was all the more significant for emanating from the one place where Darby might have thought that he had found a church after the apostolic model. The second²³ asserted that an apostate dispensation always remained such, even when revivals occurred, because evil was allowed to operate unhindered: such was the case in Old Testament history. The church could not now exercise the functions of the body in a corporate manner: obedience was left to individuals. God still ruled the church, but by

¹⁶ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.27 (19th August 1833); cf. J.P.Ward, 96.

¹⁷ For Darby's transition from historicism to futurism see Elmore, 35-8.

¹⁸ Krapohl, 94; Rowdon, *Origins*, 53.

¹⁹ Darby, *CW*, 1.20-35 (1828) and *CWit* 1.14-31 (1834); cf. Coad, *History*, 31.

²⁰ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.28.

²¹ J.L.Harris, "Retrospect and present state of prophetic inquiry", *CWit* 1 (1834): 264-81.

²² *Ibid.*, 276.

²³ H.Borlase, "Separation from Apostasy not Schism", *CWit* 1 (1834): 332-57.

providence rather than the Spirit's ordering.²⁴ The third²⁵ suggested that the immediate fall of each new dispensation was inevitable.

In 1835 Darby himself described the church as in ruins and invisible.²⁶ This in itself was not new, for Calvin had taught that at times the church could only survive in a hidden or invisible state.²⁷ However, in 1836 Darby took things a step further in "The Apostasy of the Successive Dispensations"²⁸, contending that each dispensation was meant to show that man was sinful and bound to fail in the responsibility committed to him; like Borlase, he hinted at the irreversible nature of the church's ruin by stating that it was never God's purpose to restore a failed dispensation, though he might grant a partial revival.²⁹

It has been suggested that the idea of the church as ruined received an additional impetus from the accession to the Brethren of several hundred evangelical Quakers in Manchester and the north-west of England after the 'Beacon Controversy' of 1835-6 over evangelical doctrine.³⁰ Stunt detects Quaker influence in the idea of mystical guidance operative in ministry and church government, and in the readiness of many Open Brethren to accept Darby's teachings on this.³¹ However, the mystical approach to ministry at the Lord's Table predated the Quaker influx, being seen in the gradual transition from pre-arranged to spontaneous ministry at the Dublin meeting from 1831.³² Furthermore, when Brethrenism ruptured the former Quakers tended to join the Open Brethren rather than side with Darby. It seems more probable that their move to the Brethren represented a reaction *against* Quaker ecclesiology by seeking a return to the New Testament, which would hardly have predisposed them to accept Darby's view that this was impossible.

It has also been suggested that Darby's idea of the church's ruin arose partly through Irvingite influence in Geneva, which itself was partly responsible for the disarray of evangelical *dissidence* which greeted him when he visited.³³ Darby's controversy with

²⁴ Ibid., 334, 337; cf. [Newton & Borlase], 17.

²⁵ [G.V.Wigram], "On the Cause, Means, Mode, and Characteristics of the Present Apostasy", *CWit* 1 (1834): 389-404.

²⁶ Darby, "On the Character of Office in the Present Dispensation", *CWit* 2 (1835): 90-111, reprinted in *CW*, 1.92-111.

²⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.1.3 and editor's note.

²⁸ Darby, *CW*, 1.124-30.

²⁹ Ibid., 1.124-5.

³⁰ Dr. David Brady, in conversation, 4th September 1995; cf. Embley, "Early Development", 218; E.Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, 9, 44-5.

³¹ T.C.F.Stunt, *Early Brethren and the Society of Friends*, 23-4, 26.

³² *Interesting Reminiscences*, 7 (Bellett).

³³ Stunt, *Brethren and Friends*, 24. This is supported by a Swiss historian: "ce fut par réaction contre l'irvingisme que Darby proposa sa thème de l'*apostasie de l'Eglise*." (Maury, 2.274)

Wesleyan perfectionism during 1839³⁴ may have gained urgency from his antagonism towards Irvingite notions of human perfectibility, but it seems doubtful that either the controversy or the Irvingite presence in Geneva was the catalyst for his articulation of the doctrine of the church's ruin, since this appears to have been fairly fully developed by 1836. More probably, his opposition to perfectionism and his belief in the church's ruin were rooted in an essentially Calvinist anthropology.

As we saw earlier, Darby felt the ruin before he began to articulate it: "As to the ruin of the church, the theory came for me after the consciousness of it, and even now, the theory is but a small thing to my mind; it is the burden which one bears, and which has of late even weighed me down somewhat ..." ³⁵ Perhaps the most important source for this doctrine, therefore, was his personal experience, both in his spiritual pilgrimage and in ministry. This bore out his Calvinistic views, and gave force to his belief that each dispensation was doomed to failure. The ruin was all the more apparent when he compared the contemporary church with the heavenly ideal pictured in the New Testament, and his eschatology led him to believe that no restoration would occur.

4.1.2. How did the ruin occur?

In "On the Apostasy. What is Succession a Succession of?", written in 1840³⁶, Darby asserted that the primary factor in the church's fall into ruin was its loss of expectation of Christ's immediate return, and of awareness of its heavenly nature and future destiny. The resulting decline was sudden, immediate and total, and had been foretold by the apostles themselves³⁷, although temporarily arrested by apostolic energy.³⁸

Two intertwined results followed from this loss of expectation. The church disavowed dependence on the Spirit, which led to the introduction of the clerical principle. As Newton and Borlase put it, it was "as soon as the Spirit ceased to be amongst them giving real moral power, that men began to claim OFFICIAL authority from the ordination of men."³⁹ For Darby,

The great yet simple secret is the presence of the Holy Ghost in the body being lost as to power (for He is there), disowned. The ruin then shews itself in various ways, leaning on human wisdom; leaning on clerical importance to give decency and credit to the world; so that it can join the church without suffering or the cross; leaning on particulars, "I am of Paul," etc ... The denial of the Spirit would be found in the denial of gifts, or in gifts denying the body, no

³⁴ Cf. Darby, "The Doctrine of the Wesleyans as to Perfection", CW, 3.164-205. G.T.Stokes paralleled Darby's opposition to Wesleyanism with Walker's ("John Nelson Darby", 550).

³⁵ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.52 (8th October 1840).

³⁶ Darby, CW, 1.112-23.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.118, referring to 2 Peter 2, 2 Thessalonians 2.3, and 2 Timothy 3.1.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.120.

³⁹ [Newton & Borlase], 13.

matter which, for the Holy Ghost is in both. But ruin is found in this that the church, such as God formed and fashioned it, *does not exist at all* save as He sanctions two or three meeting in the name of Jesus.⁴⁰

Whereas, in the 1828 edition of "Considerations on the Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ" he wrote with warm respect for the hierarchy, by the time of his final secession in 1834 he could speak of "The Notion of a Clergyman Dispensationally the Sin Against the Holy Ghost".⁴¹ He did not merely reject existing clergy on the grounds of their unfitness for office, but rejected the very principle of a clerical class: "The notion of a clergyman consists in acknowledging that, as the source of authority, which, they admit, is not appointed by God at all."⁴² They were "the link and bond of the great evil of the earth, and of pernicious influence over the minds of men ..."⁴³ Against the backdrop of controversy concerning the extent of lay involvement in the Irish Home Mission⁴⁴, he condemned the idea of a clerical class as contradicting the church's dependence upon the Spirit.⁴⁵ The concept of a clergyman appointed by the state under the parochial system entailed the church's involvement in a world which had rejected God⁴⁶, and the rejection of the Spirit's gifts in lay members.⁴⁷ Converted clergy were being forced to choose between disobeying the bishops to whom they owed obedience and condemning a work going on under Home Mission auspices which they knew by its fruits to be of God, thus virtually sinning against the Spirit.⁴⁸ However, in rejecting the clerical principle, Darby at this stage stopped short of rejecting all kinds of ecclesiastical office.⁴⁹

In "Parochial Arrangement destructive of order in the Church"⁵⁰, Darby condemned the clerical and parochial system as destructive of godly order because appointments were made by the state rather than the church⁵¹, and because it failed to make room for the variety of spiritual gifts with which men might be endowed, its only conception of parochial office being that of the pastor.⁵² Those who wished to serve God were thus liable to be forced into positions which were not appropriate spheres for the exercise

⁴⁰ [Darby], *Letters*, 3.289-90 (14th April 1847).

⁴¹ Darby, *CW*, 1.36-51 (published 1871).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1.41.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1.50.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.43-4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.37; cf. Hargrove, *Reasons for Retiring*, 44.

⁴⁶ Darby, *CW*, 1.50. Cf. the views expressed by Philpot in 1835, in a letter resigning his fellowship of Worcester College, Oxford (J.H.Philpot (ed.), 1.276-88).

⁴⁷ Darby, *CW*, 1.39-40.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.41; cf. Hargrove's comment on clericalism: "I am sure if it be not sin against the Holy Ghost, I know not what is ..." (*Reasons for Retiring*, 44).

⁴⁹ Darby, *CW*, 1.45.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.80-91.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1.83.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 1.84-5.

of their particular gifts, and for which they themselves were ungifted.⁵³ Worst of all, most men appointed under this system were unconverted, appointed by men but not by God.⁵⁴ Secession from a clerical system was thus not only justified but imperative.

The second result was apostasy, seen as the opposite of holiness, identification with evil. Having no perception of its true hope and calling, the church settled down to life in the world, instead of regarding itself as a stranger and a pilgrim. Borlase had described apostasy, in the church as in individuals, as "a turning back from Christ, and losing the special characteristics of His holy calling, by being again mixed up with the world out of which it was taken to be a peculiar people, a witness for His name. It is in short as to its result, identity with the world."⁵⁵

This apostasy began when the apostolic energy which had restrained evil was removed, and Satan's forces were unleashed against the assembly.⁵⁶ Evil principles in the minds of true Christians led to the admission into the church of false brethren maintaining the same principles, the result of which was the emergence of Christendom.⁵⁷ Such alliance with the world found its expression in the establishment principle: after Constantine made Christianity the imperial religion, the church was *professedly* no longer separate from the world. Thus apostasy was systematised: church and world were identified and the church's constitution founded on a Jewish model, earthly, national and external in character instead of heavenly, elect and spiritual.⁵⁸ Christendom had now become so identified with the world that it could no longer be seen as the church; reviewing his "deliverance" in 1855 in a letter intended for Professor Thöluck of Halle, Darby wrote: "It then became clear to me that ... Christendom, as seen externally, was really the world, and could not be considered as "the church," save as regards the responsibility attaching to the position which it professed to occupy - a very important thing in its place."⁵⁹

The distinction between the visible and the invisible church could provide no refuge for those oppressed by the state of Christendom. Darby saw it as proving his own point about the church's ruin, since it tacitly admitted that the church, set in the world by God as a light, had entirely ceased to provide that light if it had become invisible: "Of what use is an invisible light?"⁶⁰ Such a church could only be described as apostate.⁶¹

⁵³ Ibid., 1.86-7.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1.80.

⁵⁵ Borlase, "Separation from Apostasy", 338.

⁵⁶ Darby, *Synopsis*, 4.57.

⁵⁷ Darby, *CW*, 1.126, 281, 283; 3.278.

⁵⁸ [Newton & Borlase], 13-4.

⁵⁹ [Darby], *Letters*, 3.352.

⁶⁰ Darby, *CW*, 1.140.

⁶¹ Ibid., 32.276-7; cf. J.P.Ward, 80.

However, he introduced a related distinction between the church as house and the church as body, which began to assume a fundamental role in his thought around 1860, as seen in "The House of God; the Body of Christ; and the Baptism of the Holy Ghost".⁶²

An anonymous article in the *Bible Treasury*, "The Unity of the Church"⁶³, had made the same distinction, although Darby claimed to have arrived at his views independently.⁶⁴ The *Bible Treasury* writer considered that the church appeared in the New Testament as assembly (which existed before Pentecost), as body (incorporated by the Spirit), and as God's house or habitation. Christendom was the assembly or the "great house", and the unity commanded by Scripture to be kept was not that of the church, but that of the Spirit (Ephesians 4.3). The error of the early fathers was to confuse the church or assembly with the body, and to argue as if these were identical. The believer was in the same relation to the body as New Testament believers had been, but not to the assembly or house; thus it could be necessary to deny the unity of the church in order to keep that of the body.

Darby saw house and body as originally having been coterminous, but it was the confusion between these two aspects of the church, and the application of privileges attaching to membership of the body to those who by baptism had entered the house, which he saw as "the fundamental principle of popery, and of all that clings to it."⁶⁵ He considered "the whole Catholic system, Roman or Anglican, wrong in confounding 'the body' of Ephesians 1 with 'the house' of Ephesians 2, and attributing to the house now the privileges of the body."⁶⁶ This confusion was between Christ's building work in his church, and that of man upon the God-given foundation (1 Corinthians 3).⁶⁷ While all members of the body were spiritually quickened, this did not apply to the house.⁶⁸

4.1.3. *The church's ruined condition*

Darby did not conceive of the local church as an entity in itself, but as being primarily an expression of the universal church, the one assembly of God. The assembly of God on earth was the remnant of Israel gathered by Christ and constituted a corporate unity

⁶² Darby, *CW*, 14.15-75.

⁶³ A.S., "The Unity of the Church", *BT2* (1858-9): 220-2, 238-40.

⁶⁴ Darby, *CW*, 14.15.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.157; cf. 1.37-8, 14.15, 63-4.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.181n; cf. *idem*, *Synopsis*, 3.90n.

⁶⁷ Darby, *CW*, 1.38. Even the Reformers had not freed themselves from this confusion (*ibid.*, 7.208n). Calvin, who at points denied that there were two churches, visible and invisible, and thus could be seen as confusing these, interpreted the "great house" as referring primarily to the church, although also to the world (*Commentaries on Timothy*, 317-8 (on 2 Timothy 2.20)).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.15.

(or body) by the Spirit.⁶⁹ Scripture viewed it as subsisting in God's purpose as the body of Christ comprised of those united to him; as the manifestation on earth of that body by the baptism with the Spirit, of which the Lord's Supper was the outward expression; as the house built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets which took Israel's place as God's habitation; as man's building activity on this foundation; as the "great house" of 2 Timothy 2 containing "vessels to dishonour" from which the faithful must purify themselves; and as the eschatological apostasy which would be manifest after the rapture.⁷⁰ There is evident a progression, from the original standing in which all the terms used to describe the church coincided in their reference, to the final situation where the assembly contained no believers at all.

The metaphor of the "great house" of 2 Timothy 2.20 represented the church in its earthly manifestation, Christendom, the results of man's building activity upon the divinely-given foundation. While the salvation of the elect would not fail, this being promised in Matthew 16.18-19, the dispensation could and must, as foretold in the prophecy of Romans 11 regarding Gentile presumption.⁷¹ In "Remarks on 2 Timothy" (1863)⁷² Darby contrasted the portrait of the church in 1 Timothy, in which it still subsisted as originally established, with that in 2 Timothy, where it had become the "great house", settling into the world, having a form of godliness but now lacking visible unity; since the church had departed from its original foundation the latter epistle was addressed to individuals who had remained faithful.⁷³ The ruin was irreversible; no longer did the Spirit so act in power as to make the "exterior" visible entity the exact expression of the "interior" spiritual reality.⁷⁴ "I believe in the church now, but I know it in its reality only as the living body of Christ united to Him by the Holy Ghost. I believe there is a church on earth, but, as is prophesied by the Apostles, utterly corrupted as an external thing, and ruined ..." ⁷⁵ Worse still, "what is called "the church" is now the centre and the power of evil and corruption in the world."⁷⁶

So did the church still exist? Darby's answer to that question in 1847 was equivocal:

QUES. Is there a church now on earth or not?

⁶⁹ Ibid., 14.17, 19-20, 24.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 14.36-7.

⁷¹ Ibid., 1.144-5.

⁷² Ibid., 20.367-77.

⁷³ Ibid., 20.367, 371-2.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1.258.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 18.157.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 3.278.

J.N.D. Is there an army or not? Suppose an army not destroyed but scattered to the four winds - why, there *is* an army, and there is *not* an army; it has lost its corporate character.⁷⁷

A later independent writer with connections among both streams of Brethren, G.H.Lang, considered that Darby's error was to postulate a universally visible organisation as existing in New Testament times; Lang saw no visible body in the New Testament except the local church. He understood Darby to be speaking of Christendom when describing the church as ruined, on the grounds that the universal church was indefectible and the local church, although capable of being ruined, could be restored.⁷⁸ That Lang was correct in his interpretation is confirmed by Darby's assertion that "all the epistles which speak of ruin, of false principles which are the occasion for judgment, do not speak of a church, but of Christians in general - of the state of that which is called Christendom."⁷⁹

Coad follows Neatby in asserting that for Darby, it was the church as the company of the elect which was ruined, not merely the church as an organisation. This, they state, is what surprised the Swiss evangelical seceders, who would have readily accepted a doctrine of the ruin of the church as a visible organisation.⁸⁰ For Darby, Christendom - the house - was originally coterminous with the universal church. This body had lost the marks of unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity traditionally accorded it.

Loss of unity

Darby's thought concerning the church's unity had two foci: the attempt to realise the unity of true believers, and the need for a corresponding separation from what was evil. As his views developed, the latter came to be more prominent than the former, in practice as well as principle. "Considerations on the Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ" laid the foundations for much later Brethren ecclesiology both in what it said and in what it failed to say: Coad comments that it raised questions which it failed to answer, and that subsequent events showed this to be "the tragedy of Darbyism".⁸¹ In a memorandum of 1868, Darby described it as "no attack upon anybody, but upon the unity of the church of Christ. When I looked around to find this unity I found it nowhere: if I joined one set of Christians I did not belong to another. The church, God's church, was broken up, and the members scattered among various self-formed bodies."⁸² In the first edition, Darby portrayed division as the necessary result of

⁷⁷ [Darby], *Miscellaneous Writings*, 4.171.

⁷⁸ G.H.Lang, *The Local Assembly. Some Essential Differences between Open and Exclusive Brethren considered Scripturally and Historically*, 40-1.

⁷⁹ Darby, *CW*, 1.253n.

⁸⁰ Coad, *History*, 90; Neatby, 88.

⁸¹ Coad, *History*, 34.

⁸² [Darby], *Letters*, 1.625.

having sub-Christian aims for the gathering of believers. Unity in such a condition would have implied that the Holy Spirit acquiesced in moral evil, which was impossible: hence the rise of Dissent was an inevitable consequence of the post-Reformation outpourings of the Spirit.⁸³ As a high-churchman, Darby insisted that unity was intended to be visible, in contrast to the traditional evangelical view. Neither the Reformation nor Dissent had succeeded in bringing the church to a condition in which it could function adequately as a visible witness to God; too much of the old system still remained.⁸⁴ The various groups were based on particular differences from each other, rather than on a shared unity in Christ; none of the remedies applied to the situation, such as the formation of missionary societies, had succeeded in producing true unity, though they had within them the germ of such unity in their motivation.⁸⁵ Nor was secession the answer in itself, since those groups which had seceded had gone before God's purpose, though their secessions also served to give partial testimony to truth as it concerned the church.⁸⁶ The outward unifying of existing denominations (as seen in Roman Catholicism) was not the answer either, for it excluded the unity of spiritual life which could only be produced by the Spirit.⁸⁷ While this state of affairs continued, the church could not fulfil its purpose of united witness so that the world might believe.⁸⁸ In what seems like a presentiment of his belief in the church's ruin, Darby expressed the fear that God would never clothe himself again with the portions of the garments divided among the different sections of Christendom.⁸⁹ He offered no solutions or suggestions for action, avowing that his concern was with principles, and that the Spirit must teach believers what to do.⁹⁰ The key to restoration was dealing with the spirit of conformity to the world by becoming conformed to Christ in His death.⁹¹

Secession was often justified by unchurching the body from which separation had taken place, and in the 1834 edition of his work Darby gave some direction as to the path to take, warning believers against the trap of leaving churches only to build similar structures again (which may be interpreted as implying that by this point, some

⁸³ Darby, *CW*, 1.20-1.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.21.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.23.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.24. Nonetheless, Darby's ecclesiology was closer to Roman Catholicism than to the traditional high-church views which many Anglican evangelicals would then have shared, since he saw the church as one visible body, rather than a federation of national bodies each forming a branch of the one church (cf. Nockles, 150, 153).

⁸⁸ Darby, *CW*, 1.34, quoting John 17.21-23.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.26.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.24.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 1.27-8, 30. Coad points out that unity here depends primarily on the believer's efforts rather than on God's work (*History*, 33).

concept of the church's ruin was already developing).⁹² Separation from worldly churches was a positive duty: such bodies had no right to be described as churches; therefore such action was not schism.

The only point besides which it is important to notice, is the direct and undoubted title of christians (inasmuch as it then ceases to be schism, and is schism only from what is worldly, which is a christian's duty;) to meet together and break bread, if they wish it or feel its need; not leaning upon ministry or assuming any thing, or pretending to set up Churches, but simply (upon the ground that "where two or three are gathered together, there is Christ in the midst of them;") as individuals, merely separating from present evil.⁹³

In "The Claims of the Church of England Considered"⁹⁴, an exchange of letters with an Irish Anglican,^{the} Rev. James Kelly, Darby engaged in an extended defence against the charge of schism. He regarded a polity based on the parochial system as evil because it treated the whole population as Christian when they were not, thus making an established church into the world instead of a gathering of saints; the establishment therefore forfeited its title as a church.⁹⁵ God no longer owned it as such except in terms of the judgment incurred by its position of responsibility.⁹⁶ Darby sidestepped Kelly's charge that he was "the leader of an extravagant class of schismatics"⁹⁷ by asking, "How is it schism to leave you, if you are not the Church of God?"⁹⁸ He charged the establishment itself with schism because it forced believers to violate their consciences on matters which were in themselves *adiaphora*.⁹⁹

Similarly, Borlase argued that schism could only be from a true church, in which believers were united by the Spirit.¹⁰⁰ Secession was justified on the ground that the establishment could not be regarded as a church in view of its worldly character and the extent of nominal religion among its members; such schism from the world was always right for the believer.¹⁰¹ His article contained one of the earliest uses of 2 Timothy 2.19-20 in this connection¹⁰², a text which became central in Darby's

⁹² CWit 1 (1834): 31.

⁹³ Ibid., 29.

⁹⁴ Darby, "The Claims of the Church of England considered; being the Close of a Correspondence between the Rev. James Kelly, of Stillogan, Ireland, and J.N.Darby" (1839-42), CW, 14.176-242.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 14.190 (Darby to Kelly, 26th February 1839); cf. Hargrove, *Reasons for Retiring*, 104.

⁹⁶ Darby, CW, 14.191.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 14.177 (Kelly to Darby, 28th January 1842); cf. 179-80 (Kelly to Darby, 8th February 1839).

⁹⁸ Ibid., 14.192 (Darby to Kelly, 26th February 1839); cf. Hargrove, *Reasons for Retiring*, 69-70.

⁹⁹ Darby, CW, 14.192 (Darby to Kelly, 26th February 1842); cf. *ibid.*, 1.13 (with respect to imposing the oath of supremacy on converts from Rome).

¹⁰⁰ Borlase, "Separation from Apostasy", 340-1.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 342.

¹⁰² Ibid., 343.

justification of Exclusive practice. Borlase defined schism as union based on secondary truths or which enjoined things indifferent in themselves upon the consciences of the weak.¹⁰³ The Church of England had been more guilty of this than any other body since the apostles¹⁰⁴, and thus for the believer to continue within it would be schism¹⁰⁵ because it would hinder his fellowship with other believers and force him to acknowledge nominal Christians and clergy.

Darby explained the relationship between the universal church and its local aspect by saying that "churches were the administrative form, while the church as a body on earth was the vital unity."¹⁰⁶ The New Testament envisaged the church in its earthly existence, as well as the church in the heavenly counsels of God, as one body rather than a confederation of churches.¹⁰⁷ Although it was manifested in localised communities, it was to the universal church that believers were admitted and spiritual gifts given in the New Testament¹⁰⁸: "Gift is in the members of the whole body, and so in the whole body. Office, properly speaking, was local ..."¹⁰⁹ The problem was that the church's local aspect had been so far lost (because of the universal ruin) that any attempt to reconstitute it was doomed to failure because God did not intend or provide for such an eventuality, and represented a failure to recognise the low estate of God's people. Proof of the ruin was seen in that no church had a right to call itself by this name unless it included all believers in a given locality, and no bodies existed which did so.¹¹⁰

Darby's view of unity engendered internal strife in Brethrenism, for it required organisational union of assemblies to express it, unlike Open Brethren "independency". According to Neatby, in Darby's eyes one assembly was as much one with another as it was with itself.¹¹¹ Although Christ's body could not be embodied on earth, it was "expressed" in a given locality by the Exclusive meeting; no other had the promise of Christ's presence with the "two or three" met in His name.¹¹² Unity required not just spiritual life but the baptism of the Spirit into one body, which belonged to the

¹⁰³ Ibid., 345.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 346.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 353.

¹⁰⁶ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.114 (received 5th February 1846).

¹⁰⁷ Darby, *CW*, 1.162-3.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 3.390.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 1.131n.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 1.141. This echoes Walker's statement that he knew of no churches since the apostles' days which walked according to their rule except one or two in England and Scotland (*Brief Memorials*, 126). However, Walker did not assert the *impossibility* of such churches still existing, neither did he view ecclesiology through the lens of dispensationalism.

¹¹¹ Neatby, 185; cf. the "Bethesda Circular".

¹¹² Neatby, 200.

assembly's position alone.¹¹³ As William Kelly put it, unity was dependent upon being gathered into Christ's name.¹¹⁴ Each believer in a given locality, therefore, could and should associate with such a meeting, because as a believer he was *ipso facto* in fellowship with it. There could not be two such meetings in a locality, since this would be to divide Christ's body.¹¹⁵

By contrast, Craik emphasised the essential unity of all who had truly been born again, a unity which he considered might never be fully manifest on earth and which was thus invisible. This had been lost as a result of "a defective recognition of the supreme authority of Scripture", but this was not to be taken as implying that recovery of unity would mean that all would come to one mind on every issue.¹¹⁶ In opposition to Darby and Exclusivism, he protested "against the assumption of those who, by reason of what they regard as a more scriptural mode of meeting than that adopted by other Christians, are disposed to arrogate to themselves the high prerogative of being the only true Church upon earth."¹¹⁷ Such words are an interesting commentary on the fact that Darby's meetings came to assume a churchly character in spite of his assertion that the church was irreparably ruined.

Loss of holiness

The establishment question was one which Brethren early began to consider, and Darby came to see it as conclusive evidence of the church's loss of holiness. When the Dublin meetings began, there was no conscious articulation of the separatism which later marked both strands of Brethrenism, but only a desire to realise the spiritual unity which existed between believers. However, Darby's attitude to the world was coloured by his experiences as a curate, and he believed that the identification of church and state was implicit in the establishment principle.

Holiness, understood as separation from the world, was stunted by such an identification. In 1828 Darby pointed out that because of the contemporary church's identification with the world, each group sought its own interests and was preoccupied with securing its earthly privileges by worldly means: "... Dissenting churches using the advocacy of actual unbelievers, and the Established church, of practical unbelievers ..., to obtain a share in, or keep to themselves the secular advantages and honours of that world out of which the Lord came to redeem us. Is this like his peculiar people?"¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Darby, *Synopsis*, 2.48n; cf. 4.186-7.

¹¹⁴ Kelly, 31.

¹¹⁵ Neatby, 216-7; cf. Walker, *Essays and Correspondence*, 1.365.

¹¹⁶ H.Craik, *The authority of Scripture considered in relation to Christ an union*, 8.

¹¹⁷ H.Craik, *New Testament Church Order*, 30.

¹¹⁸ Darby, *CW*, 1.32.

Many Brethren, therefore, gave the establishment's worldliness as the main reason for their secession: by this they often meant the union of church and state and the resulting process of ecclesiastical appointment. Among Borlase's reasons for seceding were the lack of any ecclesiastical (as opposed to civil) disciplinary mechanism for dealing with evil in the church, the obligation upon ministers to allow all the baptised to take Communion, governmental assumption of spiritual authority, and the opening of the door to politically-expedient ecclesiastical appointments by the union of church and state.¹¹⁹ Hargrove pointed out that in the New Testament church and world were contrasted rather than becoming identified so that there was no world from which believers were to be called, and that Christ died to deliver believers from the world.¹²⁰ He explained the nature of the confusion which resulted from establishment:

The grand evil of the establishment, as it seems to me, is the confounding of what should be separate; the Church and the world. The world is introduced into the Church; and, in return for the favour, she is established and honoured by the world. They which, in God's word, are distinct as light and darkness, are thus amalgamated. The world, all the while, continues unchanged; it is the world still; but the Church, by the unhappy union, loses its distinctive and blessed character.¹²¹

National religion belonged to past and future Jewish dispensations, but not to the present Christian one.¹²² The church was apostate because it allowed the world authority over it which properly belonged to Christ, and ministry which was not empowered by the Spirit.¹²³ It was dependent on the state for appointments to office, legislation, discipline and financial provision.¹²⁴ The establishment principle hindered separation to God as well as separation from evil¹²⁵; while agreeing with the traditional Anglican definition of the church as a congregation of faithful men, Hargrove doubted that any empirical example existed in the establishment.¹²⁶ Since discipline presupposed a "faithful congregation", it was therefore impossible.¹²⁷ Even faithful members shared in its guilt by remaining part of such a body.¹²⁸

Dissent was open to some of the same objections: Dorman, in his apology for resigning as an Independent minister, criticised its worldliness of spirit and method, its entanglement with politics, the attention paid to worldly factors such as education and

¹¹⁹ Borlase, *Reasons for Withdrawing*, 6, 12, 18-9.

¹²⁰ Hargrove, *Reasons for Retiring*, 2-3, 26, 29.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, x.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 24n; cf. Whately, Letter I.

¹²³ Hargrove, *Reasons for Retiring*, 10n.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 12, 16-7, 19; cf. Whately, Letter IV.

¹²⁵ Hargrove, *Reasons for Retiring*, 111.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

eloquence in the choice of a minister, and the aping of the clergy by dissenting ministers.¹²⁹

Failure to practise separation from evil and the world summed up the church's loss of holiness for Brethren: in this regard Darby condemned what he saw as Roman Catholic substitutes for true holiness, such as asceticism, celibacy, devotion to saints and relics, monastic obedience and miracles. Their spurious nature was shown by the fact that they co-existed with such sins as drunkenness and violent temper. Darby surveyed some of the exemplars of Roman holiness, such as Martin of Tours and Jerome, drawing the moral that their practices were powerless to subdue the flesh and produce the true change which was at the root of Biblical holiness. Thus the Roman body could not be seen as possessing the note of holiness - a point which he went on to demonstrate from the mediæval papacy's unhappy history.¹³⁰

Loss of catholicity

We find in Darby's thinking about the church's catholicity tendencies which pull in opposite directions. On the one hand, he reacted against the sectarianism of the existing religious groupings, including the Walkerites and Kellyites.¹³¹ Though these groups sought to realise the purity of the church by separating from the worldliness of establishment religion as Darby did, they were if anything even more sectarian than the churches which they had left. With the other pioneers in Dublin and elsewhere, Darby insisted upon the need for a meeting which could embrace all visible believers.¹³² He warned a correspondent in 1833 that sectarian attitudes would bring God's work to nought: "You are nothing, nobody, but Christians, and the moment you cease to be an available mount for communion for any consistent Christian, you will go to pieces or help the evil."¹³³ Even after the events of 1845-8, he continued to insist that he met with others on the ground of the gospel alone, and that he had added no additional terms of communion.¹³⁴ However, his espousal of what amounted to a 'remnant ecclesiology' left little room for catholicity in practice, whatever his profession.

This, coupled with his theological method, doomed Darby to isolationism. He claimed that his thought was drawn from his private study of the Scriptures and communion with God, and that the insights which he gained in this way he rarely had to

¹²⁹ Dorman, *Principles of Truth*, ch.2.

¹³⁰ Darby, *CW*, 18.202-30; cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, V.7.

¹³¹ Neatby, 28.

¹³² Darby, *CW*, 1.25; cf. Borlase, "Separation from Apostasy", 355-6.

¹³³ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.21 (1833).

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.267 [1852].

renounce.¹³⁵ Though well-read in church history, he did not see it as helpful in doctrinal formulation¹³⁶, believing that the church had fallen suddenly and rapidly away from its apostolic purity.¹³⁷ He seems to have used church history largely as a source of cautionary tales and a quarry for *ad hominem* arguments in controversy, making more use of it in this way as he grew older.¹³⁸

Darby condemned Roman claims to catholicity as "a simple fable".¹³⁹ As Israel suffered division when the ruling house became corrupt, so God ensured that schism divided the church into East and West after the papacy became hardened in its pretensions: "What set up Rome destroyed catholicity." God would not allow catholic corruption, and there was no such thing as a catholic (or universal) church.¹⁴⁰ Rome could not be catholic because it was not holy - "what is called the Catholic church was the unholyest thing in the world" - and because most of Christendom was outside it.¹⁴¹

Newton defined catholicity in terms of truth, and was even less catholic in his outlook than Darby. His principles of communion were narrower¹⁴², and he saw catholicity as evidence of apostasy. In *Catholicity, in a Dispensation of Failure, a sure Token of Apostasy* (which began life as a lecture in the early 1840s), he developed this view. In a generation which persecuted the truth, there could be no catholicity of truth; catholicity in this dispensation was therefore a mark of departure from God and His truth.¹⁴³ If catholicity were evidence of the truth, the largest or most united group would be that with the right message - a conclusion which was unacceptable in view of the New Testament picture of the church in the world as a "little flock".¹⁴⁴ Catholicity of truth would only appear when Christ returned. Until then, the true church was called out from the world, as typified by the Tabernacle's location outside the Israelite camp.¹⁴⁵ God's blessing rested not on the catholicity of the apostate camp of Israel, but on those who came out from it.¹⁴⁶ He rejected Rome's claim to be the true church because of its identification with this world and its pursuit of worldly power in its attempt to realise the promises regarding the church's future glory here and now.¹⁴⁷

¹³⁵ [Darby], *Letters*, 3.306 (25th March 1850).

¹³⁶ Cf. Dixon, "Importance of Darby", 51.

¹³⁷ Darby, *CW*, 14.68-75; cf. Craik, *New Testament Church Order*, 85.

¹³⁸ Krapohl, 391; cf. A.N.Groves' opinion that church history served "to prove what was done, not what ought to be done." (*On the Liberty of Ministry in the Church of Christ*, 3)

¹³⁹ Darby, *CW*, 14.40.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.41; cf. 18.232.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 18.200.

¹⁴² Neatby, 152.

¹⁴³ B.W.Newton, *Catholicity*, 13.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 20-1.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 7-11.

Succession within the church was no guarantee of continuing truthfulness any more than it had been in Israel's history; in each dispensation succession had been a guarantee of error rather than purity.¹⁴⁸ Catholicity would set believers against every servant of God who stood for truth in the Old Testament era, and against Christ himself (Hebrews 13.12-14).¹⁴⁹

Groves had already expressed his concern about Plymouth's lack of catholicity, and in his 1836 letter to Darby expressed the same concern regarding his correspondent. His *Catholic Christianity: and Party Communion*, published posthumously, sought to recall Brethren to the catholicity of communion which had been the desire in the early days. Sadly, for all their high claims, Exclusive Brethren in particular seemed fated to reproduce the very error against which they had contended.

Loss of apostolicity

Neatby saw Darby's denial of any possibility of appointments being made to office in the church as an afterthought, developed to justify his refusal to countenance the appointments of local elders.¹⁵⁰ However, Darby's approach was grounded in his high-church background, which predisposed him to emphasise the church's apostolicity in terms of its order, and not merely its teaching. Part of the ruin of the visible church on earth was its loss of an apostolic centre.¹⁵¹ Newton believed that the loss of apostles meant the loss of the possibility of making formal appointments to office¹⁵², and some who later joined the Open Brethren also held this view: Embley quotes an account of the Tottenham assembly in 1840 which denied the possibility of ordination to office on the basis that the higher authority in the church, whose prerogative this was, had been lost.¹⁵³

However, Darby was less categorical. In 1841 he expressed the belief that it was apostles rather than the congregation who chose officers in the church, since officers were gifts of God to His people.¹⁵⁴ Yet, trying in 1852 to extricate himself from the charge that he believed it was now impossible to appoint officers in the church, he explained: "... I do not exactly believe in the impossibility of establishing elders after the death of the apostles, but in the incompetency of those who now pretend to do so."¹⁵⁵ While the law of the institution (the church) existed in Scripture, the

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 29-30.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 26.

¹⁵⁰ Neatby, 213-4.

¹⁵¹ Darby, CW, 14.306.

¹⁵² [Newton & Borlase], 17.

¹⁵³ Embley, "Origins", 107; cf. "Review of Mr. Peter's Letter", CWit 1(1834): 309.

¹⁵⁴ Darby, CW, 1.166-7; cf. 4.282-3 (1850, according to Smith, "British non-conformity", Appendix B); 14.10 (1857).

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 4.302; cf. 4.343.

institution itself no longer existed and could not be re-established.¹⁵⁶ The next year, he acknowledged that it was not necessary to be an apostle to ordain elders, but he could not say whether apostolic delegates like Timothy and Titus could do so after the apostles died.¹⁵⁷ He later added the argument that it was impossible to restore elders and deacons to the church in the absence of a divine commission to that end.¹⁵⁸ He rejected modern claims to have appointed elders, not because the Scriptural rules relating to the institutional church (which required elders to be appointed by someone with authority to do so) were not in force, but because they were: there was nobody with the required authority or divine commission (the latter being of the essence of apostleship), and so no appointments could be made.¹⁵⁹ Office and governmental order were thus lost:

... in general, government is of a different order from gift. Gift serves, ministers; hardly government. They may be united as in apostolic energy; elders were rather the government, but they were not gifts. It is specially the order of the governmental part which I believe has failed, and we are to get on without that, at least in a formal way.¹⁶⁰

Calvin had taught that when a minister's appointment was from God, the Spirit's gifts were inseparably joined with the charge to office.¹⁶¹ Since, for Darby, these were now separated, the church thus no longer existed in its normative state. However, spiritual gifts still existed: for Darby, the Spirit bestowed two kinds of gifts, the first serving to awaken souls and gather the church, and the second as signs to the world of God's presence in the church by His Spirit. The first could not fail, though the second did, as God withdrew from a failed church the privilege of testimony to the world.¹⁶² Brethren accordingly denied that ministry and discipline *within the assembly* were dependent upon endowment with supernatural gifts¹⁶³, and that belief in the principle of gifting by the Spirit as the source of ministry entailed belief in the restoration of miraculous gifts.¹⁶⁴

4.1.4. *The future of the ruined church*

In Darby's view, Christendom was heading for the same judgment as that coming upon the world with which it had become identified.¹⁶⁵ Such a prospect produced believers

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 4.304.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 4.343 (dated by Smith, "British non-conformity", Appendix B).

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 14.13.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 4.323-4, 329-30.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 1.138 (September 24th 1846).

¹⁶¹ Calvin, *Commentary on Ephesians*, 178 (on Ephesians 4.11-14); idem, *Sermons on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, 371 (on Ephesians 4.11-12).

¹⁶² Darby, *CW*, 14.3-4; 5.343-4.

¹⁶³ Mrs. Groves, 248-9 (Journal entry of A.N. Groves, 14th January 1834).

¹⁶⁴ Dorman, *Principles of Truth*, 45.

¹⁶⁵ Darby, *CW*, 5.334.

of a different temper from those reared on post-millennial optimism. Whereas in 1802 one such had rejoiced that "It is a comfort to me and my wife, that we are training up children who will bring on the Millennium ..."166, in the changed conditions obtaining in the Europe of 1840 Darby could say: "It alters ... the whole position of the soul to recognise that we live in an apostasy hastening to its final consummation, instead of a church or dispensation which God is sustaining by His faithfulness of grace."167 A mystery of lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2) was developing in this dispensation which paralleled the mystery of Christ, and which would culminate in Christendom's final apostasy and judgment.168 While ecclesiastical apostasy had already occurred in principle, a more open manifestation was still to come.169 Apostate civil power would be substituted for apostate ecclesiastical power, although the latter would still be "the secret counsellor of all the evil."170

According to Darby, each dispensation of God's dealings with humanity had ended in failure: "in everything God has set up, the *first* thing man has done has been to ruin it."171 What God intended to accomplish by His power, He first put into the ^{hands} ~~man's~~ of man as responsible.172 Man being a sinner, failure was inevitable. Although God might grant a partial revival, it was not His purpose to restore any dispensation once it had failed.173 God's purpose was rather the gathering of a faithful remnant which He would transplant into the next dispensation.174 As with previous dispensations, this one would be replaced by something better, as believers were translated to heaven and Christ's kingdom was established on earth.175 What man had lost, God would restore: "We see in all dispensations the immediate failure of man; but that which is lost in all of them by human folly will find its recovery at the end in Christ; whether it be blessing to the earth, prosperity to the Jews, or the glory of the church."176

4.1.5. *The believer's present responsibility*

Writing in Switzerland during the early 1840s, Darby summarised what he thought believers ought to do in the light of the ruin: "if I am asked what the children of God

166 Rev.J.Clayton, in J.H.Pratt (ed.), *The Thought of the Evangelical Leaders: Notes of the Discussions of The Eclectic Society, London During the years 1798-1814*, 257.

167 Darby, *CW*, 1.117.

168 *Ibid.*, 1.175-86.

169 *Ibid.*, 2.321.

170 *Ibid.*, 2.325.

171 Darby, *Synopsis*, 3.16n.

172 Elmore, 235; cf. Darby, *CW*, 20.329.

173 Darby, *CW*, 1.125; 5.117.

174 *Ibid.*, 1.154.

175 *Ibid.*, 14.87.

176 *Ibid.*, 2.347; "... Israel upon earth, and the assembly in heaven, have both been the true firstborn, whom God will not disinherit." (*idem*, *Synopsis*, 1.236).

have to do in the present circumstances of the church, my answer is very simple. They ought to meet in the unity of the body of Christ outside the world."¹⁷⁷ We can break down his counsels into the components of rejection of existing remedies for the situation, recognition of the church's condition, and united separation from evil in obedience to the appropriate Scriptural directions.

Rejection of existing approaches

The main objection of Brethren to the expedients adopted to foster spiritual life in a dead church was that they failed to recognise the depth of the ruin: humiliation instead of action should be the first response. Such expedients, by virtue of relying on human action, were in danger of failing to depend upon the energy of the Spirit. In an article on "Religious Societies" in the *Christian Witness*, Harris objected to such bodies on the basis that they fell short of being the church, and thus could not accomplish that which the church was intended to accomplish. Because they involved appeals to the world for funds, they were necessarily constituted and organised on worldly lines, rather than according to spiritual gifting.¹⁷⁸ They represented a tendency to resort to activism rather than to repent and seek God's way of meeting the need.¹⁷⁹ They owed their existence to the church's failure to fulfil its duty¹⁸⁰, but encouraged insubordination to its authority.¹⁸¹ Dissent fared no better than religious societies: Borlase sympathised with the dissenters' separation from the establishment, but not with the bodies formed by those who seceded, since these were formed on incorrect principles, and thus excluded genuine children of God.¹⁸² Kelly went so far as to call dissent "religious radicalism", and considered that it failed to do justice to the unity of the church as one body.¹⁸³

When it was founded in 1846, the Evangelical Alliance was also rejected by Brethren as a human expedient; its members returned the compliment, seeing it as standing against the unholy triumvirate of "Poper, Puseyism and Plymouth Brethrenism" and adding to its doctrinal basis a clause affirming the perpetuity of the ordained ministry.¹⁸⁴ This in itself was a comment on the threat to church life which Brethrenism was believed to present; not only did Brethren believe in the church's ruin, but even those who shared many of their beliefs and practices alleged that they

¹⁷⁷ Darby, *CW*, 1.272.

¹⁷⁸ J.L.Harris, "Religious Societies", *CWit* 4 (1837): 89, 94.

¹⁷⁹ *Ib d.*, 88.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁸² Borlase, "Separation from Apostasy", 354.

¹⁸³ W.Kelly, *Six Lectures*, 205.

¹⁸⁴ Rowdon, "Problem of Brethren Identity", 167, quoting John Angell James. Darby criticised the movement for retaining the clerical principle (*CW*, 4.77n).

ruined churches, separating rather than uniting Christians, carrying off the most spiritual members and fuelling the discontent of others.¹⁸⁵

Recognition of our condition

Writing in 1835, Wigram appeared hopeful about the possibility of partial and local restoration, on the analogy of the revivals in the history of Old Testament Israel.

Evaluating the Irvingite manifestations, he wrote:

If the Scriptures are to be our guide and standard of right and wrong, the principles and practice of the primitive Apostolic Church should surely be our pattern as to the fellowship of saints. There are indeed Churches many, and principles of Church constitution many and diverse, yet the Spirit has sanctioned but one:- to be again conformed to that, from which we ought never to have departed, should be our ambition and prayer. The only question preliminary to this is that of individual salvation.¹⁸⁶

The whole visible church could not be restored, since its rejection in judgment had been foretold in Scripture, and its restoration would run counter to God's principles of working, by which he replaced each failed dispensation with something better, rather than restoring it; furthermore, Scripture itself predicted the professing church's rejection in judgment on account of sin, in order to make way for a dispensation in which truth would hold universal sway and the people of God be visibly glorified. Yet partial renewal, in a local sense, was seen as possible.¹⁸⁷ The emphasis on the local church and the possibility of its renewal became standard in Open Brethren thinking, laying them open to the Exclusive charge of anarchic independency.

An anonymous article in the *Christian Witness* for 1838, "Thoughts on Nehemiah; or, blessing in an apostate dispensation"¹⁸⁸, was one of the first Brethren writings to apply the books of Ezra and Nehemiah to the contemporary situation. In looking at the church's circumstances, the author insisted that believers must consider in what part of the dispensation they were, so as to avoid wrong pretensions to setting up what could not be restored.¹⁸⁹ God had an appropriate order for the contemporary situation, and though this did not include formal appointments to office, believers should still recognise the Spirit's gifts and authority.¹⁹⁰ Recognising the ruin did not justify complacent acquiescence in it; this, it was considered, was the error of all forms of avowedly mixed communion.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ E.g. J.J.Evans, 75.

¹⁸⁶ [Wigram], "Verity of Revival", 154.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 157-8.

¹⁸⁸ "Thoughts on Nehemiah, or, blessing in an apostate dispensation", *CWit* 5 (1838): 111-5.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁹¹ Neatby, 90.

The basic question to be faced by those burdened over the low state of God's people was this: "Is the church of God responsible for the present state in which it is found?"¹⁹² Darby considered that it was, but denied that believers were responsible for the acts of previous generations which had brought it about.¹⁹³ Recognising and owning this responsibility did not imply that those so awakened had the power to do anything about it, any more than an awakened soul could do anything about his sin: "He is responsible for the state in which he is, although he is, of himself, incapable of getting out of it. He is responsible for the actual evil in which he walks." All that could be done was to separate from evil and await further light from God.¹⁹⁴ Recognition of the ruin did not, however, frustrate God's promises: these were unconditional and accomplished in Christ.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, recognition of human sin, incapacity and want of power was an essential prerequisite for deliverance, in the ecclesiastical sphere as in individual experience.¹⁹⁶

By 1846, Darby was saying that the difference between Brethren and other groups was simply that Brethren acknowledged their low state and thus were in the position where the Spirit could bless them. Along with others, he criticised attempts at restoration:

Some have not feared to say, "We are the church;" and really they give themselves such airs, and facts answer so pitifully to it, that there is nothing more hurtful. They assume to recommence the church *ab ovo*; they do not do so. One comes out of an immense system of ruin and corruption to recover what one can; and when we pretend to have all, it is that conscience disregards our true state.¹⁹⁷

It was this which Darby felt was the great mistake at Plymouth:

I do not limit what the blessed Spirit can do for us in this low estate, but I take the place where He can do it. Hence, government of bodies in an authorised way, I believe there is none; where this is assumed, there will be confusion. It was here; and it was constantly and openly said that this was to be a model, so that all in distant places might refer to it. ... I only therefore so far seek the original standing of the church, as to believe that wherever two or three are gathered in His name, Christ will be; and that the Spirit of God is necessarily the only source of power, and that what He does will be blessing through the lordship of Christ. These provide for all times. If more be attempted now, it will be confusion only. The original condition is owned as a sinner, or mutilated man, owns integrity of

¹⁹² Darby, CW, 1.236. Darby viewed denial of this as antinomianism (ibid., 4.325).

¹⁹³ Ibid., 1.237.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 1.276.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 2.361.

¹⁹⁶ Darby, *Synopsis*, 4.120.

¹⁹⁷ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.312 [1857]. His words could have been written with the Walkerites in mind. Walker wrote: "any church ... which shrinks from avowing itself the only scriptural church in the place does in that very circumstance in my view avow itself an unscriptural and antichristian society." (J.Walker to R.L.C., 13th August 1818, in *Essays and Correspondence*, 2.257) However, awareness of the impracticability of Walker's attempt to recreate apostolic churches *ex nihilo* may have strengthened Darby's emphasis upon obedience rather than imitation of the early church.

conscience or a whole body. But there a most important point comes in: I cannot supply the lack by human arrangement or wisdom: I must be dependent.¹⁹⁸

Darby ruled out the possibility of seeking a manifestation of the Spirit's power in restoring the church, because his concept of each dispensation as doomed to failure rendered this an impossibility. However, this did not justify either complacency or despairing fatalism¹⁹⁹: there was action to be taken.

Separating from evil

For most later Brethren, coming out of the ruined ecclesiastical system was an essential prerequisite to spiritual blessing.²⁰⁰ Following Darby, they saw themselves as "going outside the camp" (Hebrews 13.13) of Christendom. Writing in 1849, Trotter described their course of action, perhaps with the recent division in mind:

Just as Moses went outside God's camp of Israel because a calf was worshipped there instead of God, so did these brethren go outside the camp of the professing Church, because of the virtual and practical denial there of the holiness, the unity, and the heavenly calling and hopes of the Church; and finding one another thus outside, they were cast upon the living God for His guidance how to act.

They formed no system, they made no plan. Their hope was the speedy return of Jesus, And they desired to be found of Him, yea, and that as many of his saints as possible might be found of Him in such a position that they might not "be ashamed before Him at His coming." The will of God and the end for which Christ died they saw to be "that He might gather together in one the children of God scattered abroad." The very instincts of the divine life too, made them desire and feel their need of the fellowship of saints. And it pleased God to show them that they neither needed to re-constitute the Church themselves (which was plainly impossible), nor wait till He should re-constitute it upon earth (which He has nowhere promised to do), but that at once they had the warrant of His word for meeting together for worship and communion, with the assurance of the Lord's presence to bless them and guide them onward in their path.²⁰¹

Just as the Tabernacle had been set up in response to apostasy, providing a focal point for those seeking God, so believers now were called out from the camp of apostate Christendom into the assembly: "Outside the camp here below, answers to a heavenly portion above: they are the two portions of the ever blessed Christ."²⁰² The early Darby had identified himself and his fellow-believers with the church's failure, using "we" rather than "they" when speaking of the church's ruin²⁰³, but as separation gradually became a controlling idea in his thinking, those who were influenced by him

¹⁹⁸ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.115 (written from Plymouth in 1846). Newton urged a recognition of individual and corporate sinfulness, this being why light on prophecy had been given ("Fry MS", 243).

¹⁹⁹ [Darby], *Miscellaneous Writings*, 4.150-1.

²⁰⁰ Of course, they departed in this from the motivation of their forebears; cf. sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.3.

²⁰¹ W.Trotter, *The Whole Case of Plymouth and Bethesda*, 6-7.

²⁰² Darby, *Synopsis*, 1.159, 100.

²⁰³ Darby, *CW*, 1.185.

forgot this aspect of identification, pointing the finger at Christendom and using "they" instead of "we" when speaking of its failure. Separation was no longer balanced by confession.

Darby came increasingly to emphasise the need for separation from evil, by which he meant not merely moral evil but ecclesiastical evil - conduct of church life on other principles than those given in Scripture for this dispensation as irreparably ruined. However, Exclusives needed more than negative unity in opposition to evil: "Negations are nothing to build on, though conscience be a ground of conduct. This many have not understood; and because separation from evil may have been a duty, have supposed it to be a ground of union and gathering. It is not ..." ²⁰⁴ Whether Darby's followers learned this lesson is debatable, although he sought to emphasise positive as well as negative aspects of separation.

His main exposition of this theme was "Separation from Evil God's Principle of Unity". ²⁰⁵ Unity was not to be made an end in itself, since this could result in being united with evil. ²⁰⁶ True unity must always have God as its centre. ²⁰⁷ The Fall was an attempt at independence of God; the goal of God's work in the world was to unite all things under Christ, which of necessity involved dealing with evil, since God could have no union with evil. ²⁰⁸ Apostasy in its final manifestation would be characterised by unity in subjection to what was independent of God, a counterpart to true unity. Although there would be an eschatological judicial separation, by the Spirit God was now separating those whom He had called from evil to Christ, the heavenly Head of the church and "the separating power of attraction". ²⁰⁹ He was the centre and power of the church's unity on earth. ²¹⁰ Acknowledging that evil was bound to infect the body, Darby called for its agents to be excommunicated, since God was judicially present in the church, if not yet in the world. ²¹¹ If the church refused to do this, the believer must secede, since such failure to act effectively denied God's holy nature. ²¹² The believer could thus maintain the principles of unity in his conscience, even if alone, since he was united with Christ by the Spirit ²¹³, an assertion which explains the

²⁰⁴ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.229 (received 25th February 1851).

²⁰⁵ Darby, *CW*, 1.353-65. Smith dates this to 1835/6 ("British non-conformity", Appendix B).

²⁰⁶ Darby, *CW*, 1.354.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.355-6.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.356.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.357-9. Newton enjoined separation as the believer's first duty (*Catholicity*, 36).

²¹⁰ Darby, *CW*, 1.360-1.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1.362-3.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 1.363-4.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 1.364. When Darby resigned his charge, his rector asked him what church he had joined; he replied: "None whatever; I have nothing to do with the Dissenters, and am as yet my own Church." (Turner, 17-8).

paradox of Darby's insistence on the principle of unity with his practice of constant controversy and separation. Neatby described the pamphlet as "a bold attempt to reconcile his principle of universal communion with his practice of universal schism".²¹⁴

Any attempt to purify existing religious bodies was wrong: Darby interpreted the parable of the tares in Matthew 13 to indicate that this would only be done at Christ's return, since the prerogative of judgment was His alone.²¹⁵ By the same token attempts at restoration were also seen as pre-empting Christ's return: only then would all that was lost in each dispensation be recovered.²¹⁶ Furthermore, "Why build that which His coming will destroy?"²¹⁷ Yet the practical recognition of true brethren in Christ was the principle of action for believers throughout this age; that entailed worshipping together and practising discipline (a mark of the church according to the Reformers and the Anglican Homilies) in judging who should be received.²¹⁸ The bodies thus formed came to share many of the characteristics of local churches, even if they rejected the designation. As Dorman explained, reconstitution of the church ran contrary to God's purpose, yet the principle of this dispensation was that of gathering together the children of God who were scattered abroad. The church's ruin did not set this aside, for its essential characteristic remained - the Spirit's abiding presence.²¹⁹ Believers were to recognise the Spirit's moving among the two or three in fulfilment of Christ's promise in Matthew 18.20 and submit to that.²²⁰ Spiritual gifts could be exercised, since believers held them by virtue of their union with Christ as members of His body rather than their outward union with one another.²²¹

Because of the church's ruined state, the believer's duty was obedience to the Spirit's leading to separate from evil rather than attempting to restore the church along New Testament lines. Evil, ecclesiastically, was compromise with the ruined church by remaining in it or in any way accepting its erroneous principles. Since God could have no fellowship with evil, nor could the believer.

Separation had to be carried through consistently, therefore, as Darby explained in his exchange with James Kelly: "A man cannot, while acting in and sanctioning a system which involves these evils [sacramentalism and the parochial system], honestly bear witness against the evils he partakes of and upholds. The whole system is thoroughly

²¹⁴ Neatby, 296.

²¹⁵ Darby, *CW*, 2.311.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.347.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.78.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.195-6.

²¹⁹ W.H.Dorman, *A Review of Certain evils & questions that have arisen amongst brethren*, 21-3.

²²⁰ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.114-5 (received 5th February 1846).

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 1.116.

woven together. He subscribes his assent and consent to all and everything contained in it."²²² As early as 1834 Darby had concluded, doubtless in the light of experience, that the correctness of the official basis of a body was no justification for remaining where evil was tolerated:

... Christians will often find themselves in strange situations who disregard actual evil on the assumption that the system which produces it is theoretically correct; for in this manner there may be no limit to the measure of practical wickedness which will be tolerated, while conscience satisfies itself on the plea of an abstract excellence which may turn out to be a mere shadow, or worse. Such, however, is not the path of sound and Christian principle, which at once pronounces that the actual evil *is* the ground to go upon. God acts upon it, *even though the system may be His own*, ... and the church is bound to act upon it, having the intelligence of God's Spirit to discern the evil.²²³

Darby's italicised words were unwittingly prophetic, in view of what was to transpire at Plymouth.

Whether God sanctioned a body or withdrew His presence from it because it tolerated evil could be deduced from how that body dealt with evil. Reflecting in 1851 on his exchange with Kelly in the light of events, Darby qualified his earlier comments:

My reasoning with Mr. K. was on the ground, that *the principle and system were God's own*. Is that the case when doctrinal dishonour to Christ, heresy, or immorality is accepted as admissible in the church of God, namely, compatible with Christ's house and with Himself? ...

I have been asked how much corruption would make me leave a gathering (supposing it once formed on true principle); I answered, no degree of corruption as a fact. But a refusal on principle, or deliberately by the body, to remove the least, or at any rate to seek to remove it, would make me leave it; and for the reason in my answer to Mr. K. [Kelly]: it would be not God's own system, but the opposite to it in the most possible way.²²⁴

It was his contention that Bethesda and Plymouth had allowed Newton's doctrinal dishonour to Christ to go unjudged, thus forfeiting their claim to be set up according to God's own system. God's Spirit would not sanction a body which refused, as they did, to put away evil.²²⁵

Separation from ecclesiastical evil included separation from all attempts to found churches or introduce human expedients, as Darby explained: "if any Christians now set up to be the church, or did any formal act which pretended to it, I should leave them, as being a false pretension, and denying the very testimony to the state of ruin which God has called us to render."²²⁶ He continued to use the term "church", but

²²² Darby, CW, 14.189 (Darby to Kelly, 26th February 1839).

²²³ *Ibid.*, 1.81.

²²⁴ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.236-7 (received 29th August 1851).

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.106 (1845).

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.105 (1845).

explained that while it was legitimate to do so in referring to a particular assembly, it was no longer possible to speak of *the* church in a given locality, since that implied that those who did not belong to it were not to be recognised as Christians.²²⁷

Darby explained his opposition to attempts to form churches in two pamphlets written in Switzerland in 1840/1, "On the Formation of Churches" and "Some Further Developments of the Principles set forth in the Pamphlet, entitled, 'On the Formation of Churches' ..." ²²⁸ In them he adopted a process of reasoning which drew heavily on his understanding of the Reformed *ordo salutis*, and in particular its doctrine of original sin. Just as salvation came not through acknowledging God's law as good and attempting to keep it in one's own strength, but through Spirit-given awareness of one's fallen condition as shown up by the law, confession of sin, and looking to God for saving grace, so too the path for God's people began with recognition of their ruined state and confession of this, and looking to Him for grace to act accordingly. Attempts to restore the church's original constitution were like self-righteousness in the unsaved individual.²²⁹ As with individuals, so for God's people corporately what was right for an original unfallen condition was not the right path now; obedience, not imitation, was their duty. What was right for Moses when the law was first given was not right for Nehemiah when God's people were returning to Him after their apostasy.²³⁰ God's people were thus bound to seek direction from Him which was appropriate to the time in which they lived: Scripture provided this, including the call to separate from evil and the promise of Christ's presence with two or three gathered in His name; believers might preach the gospel and celebrate the Lord's Supper, since neither activity required human ordination.²³¹

Darby emphasised that God's will for believers now did *not* include the attempt to follow the instructions given to churches in the New Testament era; the power which acted in the apostles for administration and authority was no longer present, and thus believers could not follow the apostolic directions for church administration: "We can only act out the word of God by the power of God." Neither were believers authorised now to follow the commands applicable to churches in the apostolic age: these no longer

²²⁷ Darby, *CW*, 1.130.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.138-55, 156-205.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.142-3. Similarly, Dorman argued that Irvingism's error lay in its attempt to reconstruct the church, building up a system of government which dictated to the Spirit instead of allowing Him to give gifts as He willed; they should have waited on God for Him to restore what He considered the ruined church needed (*Principles of Truth*, 56-8). Critics argued that whereas attempts by individuals to return to God through law-keeping would contravene Scriptural teaching, the attempt to restore New Testament church life would not ("Is the Church of God in Ruins?" *QJP* 7 (1855): 24-5).

²³⁰ Darby, *CW*, 1.146-7.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 1.147-8, 152.

applied because such churches no longer existed. Such power was not promised for these attempts, but for obedience to the commands applicable in a changed situation.²³²

Preoccupation with making churches now thus represented a going beyond the power given to believers by the Spirit.²³³ It also risked losing sight of the church as a whole, that is, the members of Christ's body on earth: attempts by dissenters to form local churches were leading to the separation of what belonged together - membership of the local and the universal church - thus hindering the unity of true believers. Such congregations were no better than those of the establishment.²³⁴ Indeed, such attempts implicitly testified to the truth of Darby's main contention - the failure of this dispensation - otherwise why should new churches be felt necessary?²³⁵

The local church, according to Darby, was simply the aggregate of members of the universal church in a particular place; gifts were given to the individual as a member of the whole body of Christ, not of any particular local manifestation thereof. Therefore he also opposed the attempt to form churches on the ground that it would obscure not only the vision of the church universal but also the principle on which that was based - the baptism of the Spirit fitting each believer to play their part as a member of the whole body of Christ. Believers were gifted by virtue of their union with Christ through the Spirit, not as a result of membership of a particular group; this had been forgotten at Plymouth under Newton.²³⁶ Darby viewed Newton as teaching that unity brought together independent churches rather than individual believers, effectively denying the idea of one body on earth indwelt by the Spirit.²³⁷ Newton was accused of seeing himself as a teacher in relation to the local body rather than to the body of Christ as a whole²³⁸, which explains Darby's suspicion of his clericalism.

Darby considered that all the individual could do was to "Flee from the wrath to come"²³⁹, and rescue others from impending judgment.²⁴⁰ Likewise, Groves considered that:

The two great objects of the Church in the latter days, independent of growing up herself into the stature of the fulness of Christ, seem to me to be the publication

²³² Ibid., 1.138, 151, 186, 188, cf. 142.

²³³ Ibid., 1.139.

²³⁴ Ibid., 1.138-9, 143. Cf. L.C.L.Brenton: "When man would form a Church, ... what is it but the building of Babel?" ("Thoughts on System in Religion", *CWit* 1 (1834): 312).

²³⁵ Darby, *CW*, 1.144; cf. 1.197-9.

²³⁶ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.114-8 (5th February 1846).

²³⁷ Darby, *CW*, 8.349-50.

²³⁸ Ibid., 8.325.

²³⁹ Ibid., 34.121.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 1.199-200.

of the testimony of Jesus in all lands, and the calling out the sheep of Christ who may be imprisoned in all the Babylonish systems that are in the world.²⁴¹

However, Groves did not go as far as Darby in his attitude towards the church in its outward manifestation; writing in June 1847, he rejected Darby's teaching concerning the duty of believers awakened to the church's ruin as appearing to be more spiritual than the order instituted in New Testament times (before the church fell into ruin) by the Spirit Himself.²⁴² Groves refused to join any gathering which on principle rejected the need for recognised pastors and teachers, thus substituting their own more 'spiritual' order for God's order, since it was through these that the Spirit kept order.²⁴³ According to Lang, since 1838 Groves had opposed the concept of the church's ruin and its requirement of a mode of government other than that found in the New Testament as the product of expediency rather than faithfulness to Scripture.²⁴⁴

It has been alleged that Darby's 'spiritual' ecclesiology was such as to exclude the necessity of outward forms,²⁴⁵ but this appears wide of the mark: his high-church views entailed a belief in the church's ruin by virtue of his emphasis on the ruin of such forms.²⁴⁶ Darby's rigid insistence upon the necessity of church order being given outward form, with its emphasis on separation and ruin (both primarily negative concepts, in spite of his attempt to emphasise separation to God as strongly as separation *from* evil) was, like strongly sacramental or national concepts of the church, unable to accommodate other forms of Christian community, as Groves pointed out in 1836.²⁴⁷ Writing in 1837, Groves spoke of it in stronger terms, implying that Darby's approach (which he viewed as separating from much that was good for the sake of evil) was tantamount to apostasy and distinguishing between separation from sin and separation from sinners by appealing to Christ's example:

I as fully admit as you can desire, that *in my own person*, it is my *bounden duty* to depart from every evil thing; but the judgment of *others*, and consequent separation from them, I am daily more satisfied is *not of God*. The blessing of God rests on those who are separated *by others* from their company, and it is a mark of apostasy to be of those who 'separate themselves' from God's own redeemed ones; moreover, if ever there was a witness for God on earth, that witness was Jesus, and He never separated Himself from the synagogues; and this, if it proves nothing more, proves that *separation* is not the *only* way of witness, and yet He

²⁴¹ Mrs. Groves, 78 (Journal entry of A.N.Groves, 29th September 1830). The same note was struck by the Continental Society's reports.

²⁴² Coad, *History*, 123; Neatby, 220-1. Darby's belief that forming local churches would obscure the vision of the universal church surely proved too much, since it would have applied with equal force in New Testament times, when local churches existed as founded by apostles.

²⁴³ Mrs. Groves, 414 (Journal entry of A.N.Groves, 6th June 1842).

²⁴⁴ Lang, *Groves*, 255.

²⁴⁵ Coad, *History*, 121.

²⁴⁶ Neatby, 222.

²⁴⁷ Coad, *History*, 291, cf. 101.

was emphatically, 'separate from sinners,' not from their *persons*, nor *assemblies*, but *separate from their sins*.²⁴⁸

As things turned out, Groves' concept of the local church as a gathered community of believers proved more flexible than Darby's, since it allowed for the genuineness of other forms of congregation.²⁴⁹ He saw no need to separate formally from any who were not separated from Christ, adducing the apostles' conduct in relation to Judaism and the church at Corinth as support for his argument.²⁵⁰

Many of the differences between Darby and Open Brethren related to the fact that Darby emphasised the church's universal aspect, while Open Brethren emphasised the local: this was another version of the conflict between high-church and independent ecclesiologies. When Darby taught that believers should not attempt to rebuild local churches, his primary concern was with the church universal, of which he saw the local assembly as a manifestation: to him any attempt to rebuild local churches implied belief in the possibility of the universal church's restoration. By contrast, Open Brethren considered that the ruin of the universal church on earth did not preclude seeking closer conformity to New Testament principles of local church order. For example, the former Quaker J.E.Howard recognised the universal church's ruined state and acknowledged that Christians should begin by meeting on the ground of Christ's promise in Matthew 18.20 without assuming to themselves what God had not given in gifts of leadership, yet he diverged from Darby in asserting that as this body increased, God would provide elders; "Where Christ is, there must also be all power of organisation and of rule."²⁵¹ He attacked Darby's teaching as self-contradictory: if the church was seen as being formed in unity by the Spirit, a testimony which Darby believed had been specially entrusted to Brethren, this implied that God would restore its visibility, catholicity, infallibility, and power (as in Irvingite and Mormon teaching); he considered that all this was contradicted by Darby's assertion that the church was irreparably ruined²⁵², by his actions in setting up another meeting for communion at Plymouth, and by his acting on his own responsibility in the controversy rather than in concert with others.²⁵³ Although in "On the Formation of Churches" Darby had condemned dissenters for seeing meetings of believers other than their own as mere human gatherings lacking divine sanction, and for seeking to set up churches amid the ruin, Howard considered that Darby himself was guilty on both

²⁴⁸ Mrs.Groves, 359 (Journal entry of A.N.Groves, Summer 1837).

²⁴⁹ Coad, *History*, 120.

²⁵⁰ Mrs. Groves, 322 (Journal entry of A.N.Groves, 20th September 1835).

²⁵¹ J.E.Howard, *Eight Lectures on the Scriptural Truths most opposed to Puseyism*, 255-7.

²⁵² Howard, *Caution*, 4-5. However, Darby would have argued that it was the church in its divine aspect, as the body, which the Spirit was forming, whereas it was the church in its human aspect, God's building committed to man, which was ruined.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 12-3.

counts, and inconsistent in rebuilding what he pulled down; ironically, after the controversies of the 1840s and 1860s Darby's own building was itself no more than a ruin.²⁵⁴

4.2. Catholic Apostolic

4.2.1. *Roots of their doctrine of the church's ruin*

Factors which predisposed Baxter, Drummond, and Irving to formulate a doctrine of the church's ruin were also influential in shaping the thinking of other secessionist groups, such as the upsurge of eschatological concern, especially in a political climate in which the foundations of church and state seemed under threat. We may also note the influence of the Romantic reverence for the ideal, and the reaction against Enlightenment rationalism and optimism seen in a renewed emphasis on divine sovereignty and human inability. However, there were also factors specific to this movement which helped mould its ecclesiology; many lay in the personal histories of its leaders.

In Drummond we are confronted by the paradox of a schismatic opposed in principle to all forms of dissent.²⁵⁵ Although an establishment man to the core of his being, he had been involved in the "Western Schism" after his conversion and was partly responsible for encouraging the Genevan secessionist gatherings to become churches. By 1821-2 Lewis Way (who was influential in bringing Drummond to an interest in prophecy) was calling on the Continental Society to exert itself in view of the imminence of God's judgment to call believers out of ruined national churches, the mystical Babylon, which he identified as including the whole of apostate Christendom, not just Rome.²⁵⁶ The nature and results of Drummond's involvement with the British and Foreign Bible Society during the Apocrypha controversy, with the breakaway Trinitarian Bible Society founded in 1831, and with the Continental Society (which would never have survived without his money but whose credibility was seriously damaged by his espousal of Irvingism) all demonstrate that he was a man with an ominous track record for precipitating controversy and secession. It is evident from his pronouncements that he had imbibed Way's conviction that the professing church was ruined: indeed, Way's views answered his own. For Drummond, it was the faithful remnant who would form the nucleus of the true church after Christ's return.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 8, 14.

²⁵⁵ R.S.Ward, 42; cf. H.McNeile, *Letters to a Friend, who has felt it his duty to secede from the Church of England, and who imagines that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost are revived among the seceders*, 158-60n.

²⁵⁶ From, 3.441-2; K.J.Stewart, 332 (citing *Proceedings* [of the Continental Society] 4 (1822), 9).

²⁵⁷ Oliver, 112.

Factors influencing Irving in his negative estimate of contemporary Christendom included the mixed reaction to his early preaching in Glasgow and the frustrating delay he had experienced in securing a pastoral charge. However, more important was his friendship with Coleridge, whose pessimism was to reappear in Irvingism, although applied to ecclesiology rather than individual experience; Irving "foresaw only a steady decline until all the institutions of society should be overthrown and destroyed ..."258 By the time Irving wrote his *Preliminary Discourse* late in 1826, he had concluded that the Gentile church was ripe for judgment.²⁵⁹ Urgency therefore became the keynote of his application of eschatology: "The time for conversion, the time for building Churches, is gone."²⁶⁰ The summary of points agreed by the first four Albany Conferences also concluded that the Christian dispensation "is to be terminated by judgments, ending in the destruction of this visible Church and polity, in the same manner as the Jewish dispensation has been terminated."²⁶¹

Much Catholic Apostolic thinking regarding the church's ruin can be traced back to articles, often anonymous, in the *Morning Watch*. In "On the Doctrine and Manifestation and Character of the Apostasy in the Christian Church"²⁶², Irving followed Calvin in identifying Rome as the apostasy: only thus could the Reformers ~~could~~ be vindicated from the charge of schism.²⁶³ He saw it as God's plan that the church should be mixed, and as foretold in Scripture that the wicked would become more numerous and powerful towards the end: persecution would come from within the church rather than from unbelievers outside it.²⁶⁴

"Signs of the Times, and the characteristics of the Church"²⁶⁵ paralleled the state of the "Jewish church" as described by Christ with that of the contemporary church.²⁶⁶ It foretold the division of Christendom into three ("the great earthquake" of Revelation 16.18-19²⁶⁷) and the judgment of the papacy, the antitype of Babylon, leading to universal anarchy.²⁶⁸

258 T.G.Grass, "Edward Irving: Eschatology, Ecclesiology and Spiritual Gifts", *Christianity and History Newsletter* no.15, June 1995, 16; following A.L.Drummond, *Irving*, 67, Oliphant, 92-3.

259 Irving, *Preliminary Discourse*, xlix, 5-7. Irving testified to the profound influence of J H Freze upon his eschatology in this area (*Babylon and Infidelity*, iv, 268n).

260 Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity*, 585.

261 [H.Drummond], ed., *Dialogues*, 1.ii.

262 *MW* 1 (1829): 100-15.

263 Irving, "Character of Apostasy", 100; cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.2. Coleridge had argued similarly (*Works*, 10.133).

264 Irving, "Character of Apostasy", 115.

265 *MW* 1 (1829): 641-66; 2 (1830): 141-62.

266 "Signs of the Times", 1.643.

267 A description more often applied to the collapse of society presaged by the French Revolution.

268 "Signs of the Times", 2.161; cf. Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity*, 218.

Significantly, the writer of "Abuse of Spiritual Gifts"²⁶⁹ denied that any minister ordained by God or any church after the apostolic model still existed, since such a church required a body filled with the Holy Ghost.²⁷⁰

A response to the manifestations in Irving's church and the furore caused by the confessions of Baxter and Miss Hall that they had been deluded, "The Voice of God"²⁷¹, suggested that the division caused by the gift of tongues demonstrated that God would separate the faithful from the unbelieving: "The same manifestation which seals the servants of God on their foreheads, seals those to apostasy who will not serve him."²⁷²

Finally, Irving was guided by prophetic light in "An Interpretation of the fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse".²⁷³ Just as Old Testament prophecy had a double interpretation to its own times and to the future, so New Testament prophecy could be interpreted along historicist lines and in the light of charismatic prophecy; in each case, the former provided a foundation for the latter.²⁷⁴ The early church refused to go on to perfection, but this time God would see His work completed.²⁷⁵ The contemporary church was written off as Babylon, "the whole system of doctrine and discipline and customs, actually existing and practically governing Christians in this and every land upon the earth."²⁷⁶ It was most clearly exemplified by France as papal Babylon, and Britain as Protestant Babylon.²⁷⁷ The outlook for this system was bleak: "... I hold it as a simple axiom, that every change in the civil and ecclesiastical state of Christendom is a change for the worse, however much it may pretend to the contrary."²⁷⁸ The restored church would be headed by the ministries of Ephesians 4.11, especially apostles "to convey the Spirit of the risen Christ."²⁷⁹ Opposing those who suggested that in the absence of any true church, they should found one, Irving explained that what God was doing was not reconstituting the primitive church, but redeeming the church out of Babylon.²⁸⁰ Only the sealed 144,000 would be spared the

²⁶⁹ *MW* 4 (1831): 375-402.

²⁷⁰ "Abuse of Spiritual Gifts", 398.

²⁷¹ *MW* 5 (1832): 297-306.

²⁷² "The Voice of God", 300.

²⁷³ *MW* 5 (1832): 306-25; 6 (1832): 18-41, 262-85.

²⁷⁴ "Interpretation of Revelation 14", 5.308.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.266-7.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.269. Earlier Irving had identified Rome with the Babylon of the Apocalypse (*Babylon and Infidelity*, 243); the Council of Trent had sealed its apostasy, since when the true church was to be looked for elsewhere (*PW*, 1.651-2). Rome was to be condemned, not converted (*Babylon and Infidelity*, 577), and the faithful called out of it (*ibid.*, 583).

²⁷⁷ "Interpretation of Revelation 14", 6.283.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.282.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.266.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.284.

Great Tribulation and become Christ's bride; prophecy had warned believers to keep apart from and testify against Babylon.²⁸¹

A change in tone can be detected in the *Morning Watch* which parallels that in Irving: the *Christian Herald* commented on the shift from the high-church tone of early issues to one of denunciation of all churches except Irving's.²⁸² It will become clear that the main features of Catholic Apostolic thought regarding the church's ruin had already been delineated before Irving's death: he, along with Drummond and Baxter, played a greater role in formulating ecclesiology than later members acknowledged.

Baxter was highly influential as a prophet in persuading many in the movement that existing churches were irreparably ruined. What is uncertain, however, is the extent to which he was reflecting what he heard from Irving, rather than influencing Irving himself: all we can say at this distance is that the relationship appears to have been symbiotic. Baxter foretold the rejection of existing orders of ministry and of apostolic succession, and their replacement by new orders given by God, the "spiritual ministry" endowed with supernatural gifts.²⁸³ Armstrong reflected this belief, calling for a church within the church:

... do what you can to gather out of a church that is in ruins some materials that the Lord may employ for building another Temple to his glory. Go and gather out of the visible church those who shall belong to an inner church, to a church in the church, to a sanctuary in the temple, where God will eminently dwell.²⁸⁴

Such a negative estimate of existing churches would never quite disappear from Catholic Apostolic teaching.

4.2.2. *How did the ruin occur?*

The loss of apostles as the immediate link between Christ and His church and the ministers of the fruits of the resurrection was the great cause of the church's failure. In 1865 Cardale summarised mature Catholic Apostolic understanding of this process:

Through her sin and failure she lost the direct and immediate ministry of Apostles; her spiritual powers were enfeebled; she fell from the fulness of spiritual grace in which she was constituted, and which is the necessary condition of attaining to the hope set before her. No wonder that she ceased to look for the Coming of the Lord, and for our gathering unto Him; and that presently she began to dream of subduing the world and founding an inheritance upon earth. Thus she failed to hold fast that hope of the heavenly inheritance which the Apostle Paul had delivered to her, and was brought under bondage to the elements of the world against which he had warned her. In rejecting the externals of

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 5.324-5.

²⁸² "Another Case of Deliverance from Delusion", *CH* 4 (1833): 121.

²⁸³ Baxter, *Irvingism*, 20, 22; R.A.Davenport, 60; cf. Mary Campbell's ecstatic utterance on 1st February 1830: "Woe, woe, woe to the Pastors of this land, they shall be filled with judgment, there shall be no escape for them." ([C.W.Boase], 757-8)

²⁸⁴ N.Armstrong, *The Preacher* no.64, 20th October 1831, 12.

Judaism, she has become Judaistic and earthly in her spirit - appropriating to herself the promises of earthly glory given through the Prophets of old to Israel.²⁸⁵

It was the church's sin which caused the loss of apostles, and of the expectation of the Lord's return, and which thus resulted in its exchanging heavenly hopes for earthly ones. The original twelve (the Jewish apostleship) were withdrawn as the church proved unfaithful to its evangelistic task, and a new line (the Gentile apostleship) began with Paul; however, this too was withdrawn because of the church's unpreparedness and failure to accept his work, which Paul became increasingly aware that he would not finish. This was described by a phrase taken from Acts 20.22 as the "binding of the apostleship", by which was meant "nothing less than the failing altogether, *for that time*, of the purpose of God by the Gentile apostleship, and the taking away of him that did let, and would let until taken away, the fruit of which is the present now divided state of the Church of God."²⁸⁶ Hence Paul described himself in 1 Corinthians 15.8 as "one untimely born": in contrast with the usual interpretation, this was taken to mean 'born *before* his time', *i.e.* before the restoration of the Gentile apostolate.²⁸⁷ In Paul's letters a gradual decline of the church was traced, from 1 and 2 Thessalonians, in which the hope of the Parousia was lively, through Galatians, in which it emerged that it was only through Paul's preaching that the gospel was known to the Jerusalem apostles, the prison letters, in which Paul no longer wrote with apostolic authority, to the Pastorals, in which there was no trace of the hope of Christ's immediate return.²⁸⁸ Evidently the New Testament apostles were unable to complete their mission of building the church according to God's perfect plan (which was not written down in Scripture but taught orally in the churches).²⁸⁹ Since God did not withdraw His gifts once given, and since the apostles had not accomplished their purpose, human sin and apostasy was the only possible explanation for the loss of apostles.²⁹⁰ Suffering man's will to prevail, God withdrew the authority which was being resisted and despised.²⁹¹

The church could not see its need; instead of penitently mourning their loss, the baptized became content to be without apostles, even justifying their condition as God's will, since they could only be desired by a church seeking to be ready for Christ's

²⁸⁵ [Cardale], *Character*, 12.

²⁸⁶ W.W.Andrews, *True Constitution*, 41-5; [F.V.Woodhouse], *The Substance of A Ministry on the Office of Apostle in the Gentile Church*, 28. Yet Woodhouse, like Darby, held that the mystery of the gospel was only revealed to Paul *after* his binding (*ibid.*, 28).

²⁸⁷ "Great Testimony", §53; W.W.Andrews, *True Constitution*, 37-45; Shaw, 70, 169-70; [Woodhouse], *Office of Apostle*, 17.

²⁸⁸ [Woodhouse], *Office of Apostle*, 28-33.

²⁸⁹ H.Drummond, "Remarks on the Churches of Rome and England", *Speeches*, 2.203-4.

²⁹⁰ "Great Testimony", §54; cf. [Cardale], *Character*, 12.

²⁹¹ "Great Testimony", §53.

return. Incapable of fulfilling its calling (since through apostles alone could the Spirit's fulness, the earnest of its heavenly inheritance in Christ, be given), it settled down to earthly life.²⁹² The Spirit being thus quenched, He ceased to manifest Himself through gifts and miracles as before.²⁹³ The church made itself at home in the world; its expectations became those of progress and worldly success, forgetting that the powers of this world had always opposed Christ.²⁹⁴ Evidently the church's loss of heavenly-mindedness (and its expectation of Christ's return from heaven) and its loss of apostles were viewed as interacting in a vicious spiral of decline.

In condign punishment for its rejection of the ministry which held together the church universal, the church was visited with disunity, heresy and schism.²⁹⁵ Distortion also occurred in relations between church and state, two spheres of authority which were both ordained by God and intended to be sanctified by the church's anointing, but whose officials had no right to interfere in each other's internal affairs.²⁹⁶ The church, seeking overall authority to hold it together, but doing so by unlawful means, subjected itself to state control.²⁹⁷ Irving was concerned to avoid idealising the church's pre-Constantinian persecuted state under pagan government²⁹⁸, and to stress that Constantine was right to establish the Christian religion and to seek to rule according to the ordinances of Christ's kingdom. The problem was that establishment presented an occasion for temptation to the church²⁹⁹, as it sought to realise in this age what was only to be expected after the Parousia. When the rapid influx of scarcely-converted pagans after Constantine's conversion led to a dramatic decline in holiness, the bishops, who by themselves could not secure unity or its outward manifestation of uniformity, invoked the interference of the imperial power, thus paving the way for the union of spiritual and temporal power in the same hands - something which should only have occurred after Christ's return.³⁰⁰ When the Roman Empire disintegrated, the bishop of its chief city assumed temporal as well as spiritual power³⁰¹: church history ever since had been that of protracted struggle and open aggression between spiritual and temporal power, the church alternately becoming the state's slave or usurping its functions.³⁰²

292 W.W.Andrews, *True Constitution*, 21-5; Dalton, *What is the Church?*, 25.

293 "Great Testimony", §52.

294 [Cardale], *Character*, 21.

295 "Great Testimony", §55; cf. Dalton, *What is the Church?*, 22.

296 "Great Testimony", §§71-2; Catholic Apostolic views tended to follow Irving's summary in *Church and State*, ch.11.

297 "Great Testimony", §54; [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 63.

298 Irving, *Church and State*, 559.

299 Irving, *PW*, 1.428-9.

300 "Great Testimony", §§67, 75.

301 *Ibid.*, §76.

302 *Ibid.*, §77; [Cardale], *Readings*, 2.177-8.

The Reformation saw the emergence of national churches allied with the respective state powers and the mushrooming of sectarian groups - evidence of a spirit of lawlessness and insubordination which became enshrined in the concept of the right of private judgment.³⁰³ Church and state were now viewed as owing their power to the people, rather than to God.³⁰⁴ Sitwell traced a progression from the loss of apostles, through reliance upon the civil ruler and then the substitution of another ecclesiology for the divinely-given pattern, to the rejection of all ecclesiastical ordinances in favour of Scripture and the individualism of contemporary evangelicalism with its exaltation of the right of private judgment.³⁰⁵ Andrews described this as a process of progressive individualising and isolation, first of churches, then of individuals.³⁰⁶ It may be viewed in terms of the defacing of the primary characteristic of human society as instituted by God - order: what the end result of such a course was believed to be will be seen below.

4.2.3. *The church's ruined condition*

Central to the "Great Testimony" was the concept of order, and the desire to establish the nature of a legitimate use of authority in contrast to the existing disorder resulting from the church's apostasy.³⁰⁷ Because of the importance of the visible body as the outward manifestation of spiritual reality, the disorder was seen primarily in organisational terms. Cardale likened the church to a malfunctioning machine:

If the Christian community fail to express the one mind of God, as a community, or in any of its parts, we may be sure that the organization of life is interfered with, and the machinery is out of order. If, on the other hand, the organization is disordered, and its action imperfect, we may be sure that there will be a failure in the visible unity of the body, that the purpose of God will be delayed, and that the special ministry of the Church in the midst of the world will be impeded, until the complete organization is restored, and the Church is seen to be one united Body, the same in manifestation through her proper organs, as at the beginning.³⁰⁸

The church's order was maimed and disfigured, so that no section of Christendom bore the character of one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.³⁰⁹ So serious was the disfigurement that Hardman could assert that the whole of Christendom was Babylon, and that because God no longer manifested Himself in any part of it, there was now no

³⁰³ "Great Testimony", §§82-3, 90.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, §91.

³⁰⁵ [Sitwell], *Purpose*, 78.

³⁰⁶ W.W.Andrews, *True Constitution*, 72.

³⁰⁷ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 65.

³⁰⁸ [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.114-5. Such an analogy gave weight to Miller's criticism of Catholic Apostolic ecclesiology as "mechanical" (*Irvingism*, 2.15).

³⁰⁹ "Great Testimony", §52.

visible church.³¹⁰ Armstrong described Babylon as "a church where the Spirit of the Lord is not, and where the manifold devices of the natural man are put in the place of the manifold wisdom of Christ in the Spirit".³¹¹ However, the mission to "gather gold" in 1838-9 proceeded on the assumption that there was good to be found in every church, which would temper such unrelievedly negative assessments.³¹²

Loss of unity

The "Great Testimony" spoke of the church as one in its life, its source, its food, its administration and its possession of the Spirit; it was one even as the Father and the Son were one (quoting John 17.21-23); it was also "one of a kind".³¹³ Cardale described the church as one in origin (growing as the Spirit added individuals to it), in constitution (internally, since the Spirit sought to conform believers to the mind of Christ; externally, through its government as divinely ordained and efficient for its particular purpose), and in faith (as it held the truth, ascertaining it through the ministries given for that end).³¹⁴ The current disunity hindered God's purpose, yet true unity still subsisted and would again be made manifest that the church might become what it was meant to be.³¹⁵ The church's unity was necessitated by the unity of believers with Christ as the Head of the one body³¹⁶; this was not an abstraction, since He conveyed the one Spirit to them through ordinances and sacraments. Thus the pattern laid down in Scripture should never be altered, as it was designed for this end.³¹⁷

It was apostles who had been God's ordinances for unity of spirit, of faith and of rule, as they were charged with permanent jurisdiction and oversight of the universal church.³¹⁸ They functioned as the focus of unity as the church submitted to their teaching and rule.³¹⁹ Individuals joined local churches, and these were bound together as the universal church by the apostles and the other universal ministries.³²⁰

³¹⁰ [E.Hardman], *An Exposition of chapters xii, xiii, and xiv of I Corinthians*, 96-7. Hardman may have influenced (and been influenced by) Darby, but he did not call the ruin irrevocable.

³¹¹ N.Armstrong, "Exposition and Sermon, 10th October 1832", 10, in *Sermons of Irving and Armstrong*. The implication is that those rejecting the gifts were part of Babylon.

³¹² Calvin, while regarding Rome as Babylon, could still acknowledge that vestiges of the true church remained therein although vital marks were missing (*Institutes*, IV.2.11-2).

³¹³ "Great Testimony", §46.

³¹⁴ [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.113-5.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.115.

³¹⁶ Cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.2.6.

³¹⁷ [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.113.

³¹⁸ "Great Testimony", §54; cf. Dalton, *What is the Church?*, 29-30.

³¹⁹ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 43.

³²⁰ [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.408.

Division thus resulted from their loss³²¹; bishops were intended to rule local churches, and thus could not assume the responsibility of ruling the universal church. Councils were no substitute: "What a single Bishop has not, no number of such Bishops can acquire [*sic*] - The defect of their jurisdiction is a defect of *character*, not of mere *extent*."³²² Thus the universal church's visible structure, which testified to the spiritual unity of the baptized, began to collapse. Gifts could no longer be manifested, for by them God would appear to be setting His approval on one section of the church over against another. The church could only send out missionaries of particular sects, rather than Ephesians 4 ministries to minister the one faith and the one Spirit.³²³

Church history was seen as a long struggle to bring in unity by unlawful means to fill the gap left by the loss of apostles - the appeal to temporal power, or the usurpation by one bishop of authority over his colleagues.³²⁴ Unity under the papacy brought only tyranny and bondage, as the church attempted to survive without apostles.³²⁵ The concept of an invisible unity could provide no refuge: invented to avoid the need to face up to Christendom's divided state, it led to schism and error, which were most evident in the divisions of Protestantism.³²⁶ Sitwell listed the different types of church under the rule of men (only the Brethren appear to have been omitted!):

1. That in which the King, who has no right to rule in the Church at all, is made head and supreme.
2. The Papal, a usurpation of the apostleship, and a taking of the place of the fourfold ministries of Christ.
3. The Patriarchal, a useful division of labour, perhaps, if under the central authority of apostleship, but, when independent, or under the control of emperors, only an instrument of schism.
4. The Episcopalian, an inadequate provision for the rule of the Church Universal, or of national Churches, as time has proved, and, as it exists at present, a very great departure from primitive Episcopalianism.
5. The Presbyterian, also utterly inadequate for the government of the Church either Universal or Particular, and as much a departure from primitive Presbyterianism, as modern Episcopalianism from its primitive type.
6. The Congregational, a usurpation on the part of the people; the opposite end of the scale to the Regal and to the Papal, and equally and more fatally false.
7. Methodism, spiritual indeed; but ignorant of, and casting off all rule in the Spirit, mingling the flesh with the Spirit, loud and clamorous.
8. The Baptist, denying the seal of God's covenant to His children's children.³²⁷

Instead of recognising the real evils facing Christendom and the real hope of believers, these divisions were preoccupied with attempts to convert each other.³²⁸ Division meant that each movement of the Spirit throughout history had been perverted to serve

³²¹ W.W.Andrews, *True Constitution*, 28.

³²² R.-F.Edel, *Heinrich Thiersch als Ökumenische Gestalt*, 317 (Carlyle to Chevalier Bunsen, 18th May 1845).

³²³ "Great Testimony", §52.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, §§55, 75; W.W.Andrews, *True Constitution*, 30.

³²⁵ "Great Testimony", §61.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, §§61, 89; [Tarbet], *Christ and the Church*, 10..

³²⁷ Sitwell, *Purpose*, 178-9.

³²⁸ H.Drummond, *Speeches*, 2.215.

sectarian interests.³²⁹ Unity was seen as foundational to the church's restoration, since holiness in Scripture was that of a united, visible, and complete body³³⁰, and God's glory was obscured by the church's divided state.³³¹

Loss of holiness

Cardale defined the church's holiness as meaning that its members were regenerated by the Holy Ghost, that it was itself the Temple of the Holy Ghost (who produced the manifestations of spiritual gifts within it), and that it was set apart in Christ as a royal priesthood and holy nation to fulfil God's purpose on earth.³³² The "Great Testimony" understood the church's holiness in terms of its being the bride of Christ, a living sacrifice (Romans 12.1-2), God's dwelling-place, and enjoying the Spirit's presence, gifts, and fruit; this added up to a damning contrast with the existing church.³³³ This was ruined; it could only manifest a partial holiness because of the imperfection of its order (in particular, its lack of apostles as channels of grace): holiness demanded unity, which was impossible without apostles.³³⁴

The church had also lost its characteristic of holiness as a result of losing sight of its heavenly calling, hope and nature, and thus becoming mixed up with the world.³³⁵ This, as we have seen, paved the way for it to espouse earthly hopes, and to seek to achieve its aims by worldly methods and with the aid of earthly rulers. However, they did not follow the Brethren in applying this to the establishment of religion.

Loss of catholicity

Irving had seen catholicity as implying universality with reference to time, place, and persons. This understanding entailed rejection of Roman claims to catholicity: "inasmuch as it is Roman, it is not catholic; inasmuch as it is catholic, it is not Roman."³³⁶ Far from being the catholic church, Rome was the ultimate parody of a church, as the ultimate manifestation of sinful human nature: "The Papacy is the mystery of the human heart brought into manifestation. Whenever I look upon it, I tremble at the image of myself."³³⁷ Yet the movement came to broaden its condemnation of Rome to include the whole of Christendom.

³²⁹ H.Drummond, *Fate*, 68.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

³³¹ "Great Testimony", §65.

³³² [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.115.

³³³ "Great Testimony", §47.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, §52.

³³⁵ Dalton, *What is the Church?*, 21, 36.

³³⁶ Irving, *PW*, 1.174.

³³⁷ Irving, *Church and State*, 539.

The "Great Testimony" referred the church's catholicity to its calling to share the life of God with all men as it proclaimed the gospel.³³⁸ Because the church had largely lost its original unity and holiness, it could not be considered catholic in its present divided state; only a united and holy church could take the gospel to all that they might believe.³³⁹ Cardale defined catholicity with reference to the church's boundaries as well as its mission: "It comprises all baptized men, and all congregations"³⁴⁰; catholic because it was one and therefore embraced all, through it came every divine remedy for human ills and every spiritual blessing.³⁴¹ He considered that what most hindered the growth of catholicity and unity was the establishment of national churches: "Nothing so effectually hinders the operation of Catholic principles, and renders impossible the unity of Holy Church, and the true and expansive action of the ordinances of God, ... as that binding up of schism by law, which takes place under the system of National Establishments placed under the power of the State."³⁴² For all his support of a national church, Irving had acknowledged that such bodies tended to adopt national quarrels and jealousies.³⁴³ More positively, freedom from nationalism made it possible for Catholic Apostolics to conceive of a movement under ministers with universal jurisdiction which could bring together such bodies and the fragments of spiritual understanding which each possessed.

Catholicity was never interpreted as implying widespread reception of the movement's message, however: reflecting in 1865 on the its failure to make as much headway as had been hoped, Cardale warned against the false and worldly understanding of catholicity inherent in the widespread expectation of the progress and success of Christianity in this age, which arose from the church's exchange of heavenly hopes for earthly ones and its consequent acquiescence in the loss of apostles.³⁴⁴

Loss of apostolicity

According to the "Great Testimony", the church as a whole was apostolic in nature in that it was sent by Christ as He was sent by the Father, for the purpose of showing God's will for human society, and apostolic in form and office in that it preserved the divinely given ordinances for ministry, through whom God's people were filled with the Spirit.³⁴⁵ However, their understanding of the loss of apostolicity represents a

338 "Great Testimony", §48.

339 Ibid., §52.

340 [Cardale], *Readings*, 1. x.

341 Ibid., 1.116.

342 [J.B.Cardale], *A Manual or Summary of the special objects of Faith and Hope in the present times*, 99 (Note T).

343 Irving, *PW*, 2.77.

344 [Cardale], *Character*, 21-2.

345 "Great Testimony", §49.

distinctive aspect of Catholic Apostolic thought concerning the contemporary church (although apostolicity was an issue considered by many others at the time); they understood it not merely as the loss of apostolic teaching, nor even as the loss of ministry in an apostolic succession, but the loss of living apostles. Lacking apostles, the church could not be fully apostolic, although traces of apostolicity had been retained in the historic threefold order of ministry.³⁴⁶ The church could only be one, holy, and catholic if it was fully apostolic.³⁴⁷ Conversely, God could only set apostles in a church which was one, holy, and catholic; only such a body could send forth apostles (or ministers ordained by them) to witness to Christ and to communicate the life for the communication of which the church was constituted.³⁴⁸

Cardale asserted that apostles were the link between Christ and His body; through them it was united, sealed, governed and directed. Their ministry was essential for it to fulfil its mission and be perfected.

Without the ministrations of Apostles, and without faith to receive these ministrations, the heavenly inheritance cannot be attained: and the earthly inheritance, in the absence of the Lord, can only be a Tower of Babel. The attempt to build it has been frustrated by Him: it has issued in division, and confusion, and subjection to the rulers of this world.³⁴⁹

The absence of men to manifest the gift of apostleship was thus overwhelming evidence of apostasy.³⁵⁰

The loss of apostolic rule meant that the church lacked a head, since Christ always ruled through "ordinances" (a term which in Catholic Apostolic thought referred not so much to sacraments as to the ministries which Christ called and gifted individuals to fulfil).³⁵¹ In proportion to the curtailment of the church's offices the blessing of God was also curtailed, since these were the channels through which that blessing flowed.³⁵² While the ordinances necessary to individual salvation had been preserved, those which would have ministered the Spirit's fulness and which would have united individual believers into one visible body had not.³⁵³ The sacraments did not convey the fullness of spiritual grace, since they were administered by men with an inferior commission, not being ordained by apostles - hence there was scope for controversies about sacramental efficacy to arise.³⁵⁴ Apostles being the normal channels through

³⁴⁶ [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.116-8.

³⁴⁷ [J.S.Davenport], *What is the Cause of the Secessions to Rome?*, 7.

³⁴⁸ "Great Testimony", §52.

³⁴⁹ [Cardale], *Character*, 13.

³⁵⁰ "Great Testimony", §54.

³⁵¹ W.W.Andrews, *True Constitution*, 29.

³⁵² "Great Testimony", §62.

³⁵³ [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.554.

³⁵⁴ "Great Testimony", §64.

whom the Spirit was bestowed, their loss led in turn to the loss of the other foundational ministry, that of prophets³⁵⁵, and of other spiritual gifts.³⁵⁶ Spiritual life was feeble, growth hindered, and God's purpose in abeyance; instead of abiding within the church, the Spirit was lingering on the threshold.³⁵⁷ Like Darby, Irving saw clericalism as the result:

The first evil which grew out of the subsidence of the gifts was, the separation of the clergy into a distinct class from the laity; and this evil adheres to every ordained minister, with the exception of those in a few very inconsiderable churches; for the office of pastor being placed in Scripture after that of the prophet, the ministers who now exercise the former office alone will never submit to sink down into their proper place; they will be lords over God's house, instead of servants in it, and will resist the right of the Master to elect whom he will among the household to be the bearer of his message to the rest.³⁵⁸

No other means could perform the work for which apostles were given, neither the papacy as supreme over the church, nor bishops as successors to apostles.³⁵⁹ However, their loss seems to have been considered as allowed within God's purposes:

While it was the will of God, or rather the permitted postponement of His purpose, that the Church, instead of uninterruptedly taking possession of her full inheritance, should languish, learn her own wretchedness, and be tried with a long wilderness condition, making scarcely any unless a retrograde progress, there was no place for the continuance of Apostles ...³⁶⁰

Apostles would have been useless in such a church, being constantly rejected or calling continually for judgment, and thus it was in mercy that God withheld them.³⁶¹ Yet God would not indefinitely delay exercising His prerogative of mercy in restoring the fallen church, or that of judgment on the church as apostate.

4.2.4. The future of the ruined church

We have seen the pessimism concerning Christendom's future, partly derived from Coleridge, which found expression among the Albury circle. Irving denounced the General Assembly as "one of the most wicked of all God's enemies upon the face of the earth for having denied and fought against all the foundations of the truth as it is in Jesus, and cast out his servants for preaching the same."³⁶² The vehemence of his denunciation parallels Darby's belief that ecclesiastical corruption was the worst of all forms of corruption. Along with Irving's conduct towards the General Assembly, it can

³⁵⁵ Ibid., §57.

³⁵⁶ J.S.Davenport, *Edward Irving and the Catholic Apostolic Church*, 41.

³⁵⁷ "Great Testimony", §63.

³⁵⁸ [E.Irving], Preface to [H.Drummond], ed., *The General Delusion of Christians*, xiii.

³⁵⁹ "Great Testimony", §§54-5.

³⁶⁰ Norton, *Restoration* (1854), 4.

³⁶¹ T.Carlyle, "Apostles Given, Lost, Restored", *Collected Works*, 325.

³⁶² Irving to the Moderator of the Presbytery of Annan, 13th October 1832, New College Edinburgh MSS, Box 9.3.19.

only be appreciated against the background of the Albury circle's views concerning eschatological apostasy; they expected the destruction of the visible church in parallel with the destruction of the Jewish order at the end of the previous dispensation. Irving viewed baptism as bringing with it covenant obligations, failure to fulfil which led to judgment. Hair pointed out that this connected baptism with prophecy³⁶³; if this apostasy and judgment were prophesied, then we might say that in some sense ruin was inevitable, although the ruin foreseen was that of Christendom rather than of the body of Christ.

Catholic Apostolics followed Irving in foreseeing the inevitable judgment and resulting destruction of mystical Babylon: being composed of nations which had apostatised from covenant relation with God, it would suffer covenant judgment.³⁶⁴ From the beginning, Christendom had rejected God's ordinances and institutions, and would be cast off as apostate.³⁶⁵ The severest judgment would fall on the most favoured part of Christendom - Britain. Their position, though it came to be more respectfully expressed, did not alter significantly from Drummond's in 1832: "God has certainly returned once more into His Church; he is about to build a spiritual temple for Himself now that He has begun to destroy the outward Churches which are all apostate by having set up human standards above His word, & rejected the voice of His Spirit ..." ³⁶⁶ The elect, however, would be gathered in, as Cardale explained: "Though the casket be lost, the jewels shall be saved in the day of the Lord."³⁶⁷

While Catholic Apostolic writers shared the conviction of the Brethren that the church had failed, they differed from Darby in believing that restoration of its perfect form and order (for the purpose of recovering a faithful remnant) was God's purpose as a pre-requisite for the return of Christ.³⁶⁸ Without the twofold witness of the church to Christ and of God to the church by the Spirit, its testimony was not complete and binding (taking the Biblical principle of the legal need for testimony from two witnesses). Thus the world was not left without excuse for its unbelief; the final judgment and consummation of all things was therefore necessarily delayed.³⁶⁹ Yet, because the church was Christ's body, it was always possible for apostles and other ministries to be restored; indeed, God had no other plan for the church's perfecting.³⁷⁰ In spite of the extent of the ruin, there was still hope:

³⁶³ Hair, 61.

³⁶⁴ "Great Testimony", §2.

³⁶⁵ [Cardale], *Readings*, 2.43.

³⁶⁶ Drummond to Chalmers, 23rd August 1832, New College Edinburgh MSS.CHA.4.178.25.

³⁶⁷ [Cardale], *Readings*, 2.43.

³⁶⁸ Sitwell, *Purpose*, 367.

³⁶⁹ "Great Testimony", §44.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, §63; H.Drummond, *Abstract Principles*, 159-63.

The Church is in the condition of a man faint, and sick, and apparently dead, who putteth forth neither manly voice nor vigorous action, and is even incapable of thought, and almost beyond feeling; but let that man revive again, (and we know the Church never dies,) and he will both hear and see and feel and act the man. So, if the Church reviveth, she must act as the Church; which is not in the way of holiness merely, but in the way of power, for the manifestation of the completeness of the work in flesh, and the first-fruits of the same work in glory.³⁷¹

Carlyle acknowledged the possibility of apostasy *in* the church, but denied the apostasy *of* the church, on the ground that it was indissolubly united with the Spirit.³⁷² Though Adam, Israel, and the church had all failed, all would be restored.³⁷³ Indeed, the church would have disappeared apart from God's purpose to restore it and send down His blessings through the restored channels.³⁷⁴ God's intention to fulfil His purpose, in preparation for the destruction of the present social order, implied the restoration of apostles at some point before Christ's return; they were still needed, as the church was not yet complete or perfect. Adapted for the performance of its particular task, it had to be corrected and restored where it had deviated from its constitution, and God would do this because His church could not fail.³⁷⁵ Their restoration in the work of God now proceeding implied that Christ's return was imminent.³⁷⁶ Conversely, the imminence of the end, inferred from contemporary events, should stimulate watchful believers to look for God to intervene in restoration, which was to be seen as strengthening what remained, not setting it aside.³⁷⁷ However, this was not to be taken as implying the restoration of the Christian dispensation: this had failed and could not be restored, for Christ's means never recovered a failed dispensation.³⁷⁸ A falling away had been foretold in the New Testament itself, and every dispensation was to terminate in judgment and a higher be brought in.³⁷⁹

Cardale made an important distinction between the church as Christ's body, which was perfect, and the members of the body on earth, the company of the baptized, who stood in need of absolution: apostasy could only be imputed to the latter, and would never become total and absolute until the final separation when the apostate church would be gathered under Antichrist in open warfare against Christ.³⁸⁰ Before that, the

³⁷¹ Irving, *CW*, 5.502.

³⁷² Translator's note in Thiersch, 57-8n.

³⁷³ Dalton, *Fourfold Ministry*, 7-8; H.Drummond, *Abstract Principles*, 159-.

³⁷⁴ "Great Testimony", §56.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, §§29, 36.

³⁷⁶ H.Dalton, *The fourfold Ministry, a Permanent Gift unto the Church*, 14; Norton, *Restoration* (1861), 12, following a letter of James Macdonald of 20th April 1830.

³⁷⁷ W.W.Andrews, *True Constitution*, 87, 114.

³⁷⁸ Sitwell, *Purpose*, 366-7.

³⁷⁹ W.W.Andrews, *True Constitution*, 76-8.

³⁸⁰ [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.551-5.

willingness of bishops to be without apostles would have its fruit in the readiness of presbyters to do without bishops, and ultimately to be themselves dispensed with.³⁸¹ The next step in this process of the rejection of authority would be for the state to treat all forms of religion equally, thus ceasing formally to recognise God's church - an act amounting to a virtual denial of divine revelation.³⁸² Rulers would despise their anointing and rule oppressively, provoking a revolutionary backlash, as happened in France.³⁸³ Democracy would come to rule in the church with the overthrow of all established order; infidelity would carry away church and state as visible ordinances witnessing to God, thus paving the way for Antichrist to set up his own parodies.³⁸⁴ The French Revolution was but a foretaste of the lawlessness to come³⁸⁵, and the whole social fabric was already beginning to unravel: in Drummond's words, "Religion is that which binds: Liberalism is that which looses, & is fast cutting us adrift."³⁸⁶ The "Great Testimony" called on civil and ecclesiastical rulers to heed its words as the only way of escape. Unless they did so, clergy would rally to the False Prophet, and civil rulers would give their authority to the Beast, to make war with the Lamb.³⁸⁷ Only a people filled and sealed with the Spirit could abide before God, and the church must be perfected for this to happen, and the church to be caught up away from the tribulations and judgments coming upon the earth.³⁸⁸

4.2.5. *The believer's present responsibility*

One principal end of the dispensation was to make manifest the church's ruined state, that it might recognise its need and seek God's grace.³⁸⁹ During April 1833, a prophecy was given at the service when Irving was inhibited from performing ministerial functions, that "it was His will we should know, and the whole Church feel, our destitute condition, and cry to Him for the ordinances from heaven."³⁹⁰ Drummond, after he withdrew from McNeile's congregation to hold meetings in his house, always confessed in prayer the irregular nature of meeting without ordained leadership.³⁹¹ Attacked by a reviewer of *Abstract Principles of Revealed Religion* for making no positive suggestions for action, he explained that until the whole church agreed to cry to God to deliver it from its evils, there was no use in suggesting anything

381 "Great Testimony", §56.

382 *Ibid.*, §93.

383 *Ibid.*, §§95-6.

384 *Ibid.*, §§56, 97.

385 *Ibid.*, §§96-8.

386 Drummond to J.J.Strutt, 11th April 1828, Strutt Archives.

387 "Great Testimony", §§99, 102.

388 *Ibid.*, §§101-2.

389 A.C.Barday, "The Four Dispensations", 3. Cf. Darby's idea that man was placed on trial in each dispensation that his sinful condition might be made manifest.

390 E.Miller, *Irvingism*, 1.121, following Norton, *Restoration* (1861), 67.

391 [H.Drummond], *Narrative of Circumstances*, 18.

further.³⁹² Cardale also wrote of the need to contemplate the ruin and its consequences, to feel and confess these as identified with the whole of Christendom, and to respond to God's provision.³⁹³

The importance of feeling as well as understanding the professing church's condition, evident in the structure and content of the "Great Testimony", is not surprising given the Irvingite movement's debt to Romantic thought, and undoubtedly owed something to the approach exemplified by Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection*. Coleridge regarded the fact and experience of original sin as the starting-point for Christian theology³⁹⁴, grounding it in his own experience as something felt before it was articulated³⁹⁵; Christianity provided the unique remedy.³⁹⁶ He dispensed with using 'evidences' of Christianity to convince people of its truth: "Make a man feel the *want* of it; rouse him, if you can, to the knowledge of his *need* of it; and you may safely trust it [Christianity] to its own evidence ..." ³⁹⁷ This was to be the approach of Catholic Apostolic apologetic for restored apostles.

Feeling the situation was one thing, but what practical action should those thus burdened take? Tudor, as editor of the *Morning Watch*, denied that the church's state justified secession and criticised contemporary Calvinist evangelicals for their preoccupation with saving themselves: "it is our firm conviction that it is the duty of every one to stick to the wreck, and not to leave it: that if anyone will leave it he cannot be saved; but that all who stick to it will, some on one plank, some on another, get safely to land at last."³⁹⁸ Irving, too, had held it schismatic to separate where a church's articles and services expressed a correct doctrinal foundation, because although God might judge such a house, He could not desert it³⁹⁹; he had exhorted the faithful to remain in their churches until these were destroyed and they themselves caught up to Christ.⁴⁰⁰ Those who wished to join his church were encouraged to remain where they were, even if their minister opposed his teaching.⁴⁰¹

³⁹² H.Drummond, "Postscript to Abstract Principles of Revealed Religion", 1. Drummond's vagueness in this respect mirrored Darby's.

³⁹³ [Cardale], *Readings*, 2.179-80.

³⁹⁴ Coleridge, *Works*, 10.265.

³⁹⁵ McFarland, 233-4.

³⁹⁶ Coleridge, *Works*, 10.289.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.405-6.

³⁹⁸ [J.O.Tudor], "Calvinism not the whole of Christianity", *MW* 3 (1831): 375. Similarly, it was alleged that Drummond "towards the close of his career told one of his earlier friends that he believed they were all in shipwreck, and that the best advice he could give was that each should lay hold of any plank within reach." (*Religious Systems of the World*, 597n, in British Library file 764n19, f.104a).

³⁹⁹ Irving, *CW*, 5.372-3.

⁴⁰⁰ Irving, *Last Days*, xxx i.

⁴⁰¹ *The Metropolitan Pulpit; or, sketches of the most popular preachers in London*, 1.183.

However, once the General Assembly had condemned Irving's writings and deposed several of his closest associates, he became increasingly isolated, regarding his opponents as part of the eschatological apostasy. He advocated separation from the Church of Scotland as an apostate body.⁴⁰² Those who could find no faithful ministry under which to sit were to "meet together, and worship amongst themselves, crying to the Lord to raise them up Apostles, Evangelists, Prophets, Pastors and Teachers, and Elders and Deacons, and the other office-bearers in his house."⁴⁰³ Writing to his father-in-law just before his death, Irving looked for God "to send men fully armed with the armour of God against the battlements of that Babylon of which you are still a watchman to shatter them to pieces that the children of the Lord and a good company of the priests also may come out to be baptized of the Holy Ghost & builded together into the true Church the Bride of the Lamb."⁴⁰⁴

The concluding appeal of the "Great Testimony" had exhorted readers to heed its message as the only way of deliverance from coming tribulation, but by contrast with earlier exhortations to come out of Babylon, clergy were encouraged to remain in their places and fulfil their duties; laity were to reverence all catholic bishops and their clergy as divinely appointed ministers, and not separate themselves from them. God was not giving another priesthood but restoring that which existed, not erecting new altars but rebuilding those which had become ruined.⁴⁰⁵ All were encouraged to accept the fourfold ministry if they were in churches where it was given; where it was not, or where ties of family or duty precluded submitting to it, they were to testify by their conduct that they were in communion with the whole catholic church, fulfilling their duties to their superiors. Ministers were to recognise what God was doing, separate from sin, and pray for those gathered under apostles.⁴⁰⁶ Rulers were to do their duty, sustain the church, and to submit in the ecclesiastical sphere to their spiritual leaders.⁴⁰⁷ Such an approach, with the implication that there was a "church within the church", had marked the practice of pietist groups and represents a change of direction from Baxter's insistence on the "spiritual church" as replacing the existing apostate church.

While the faithful were to call out believers remaining in Babylon⁴⁰⁸, secession was generally discouraged, since the work was intended as a focus for a renewal to encompass all Christendom. Clergy who accepted the restored apostles were encouraged

⁴⁰² Irving, "Judgment", 21-2.

⁴⁰³ *Ib d.*, 23.

⁴⁰⁴ Irving to Rev. John Martin, 21st November 1834, United Reformed Church History Society.

⁴⁰⁵ Summarised in [Cardale], *Manual*, 124-6.

⁴⁰⁶ "Great Testimony", §121.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ib d.*, §122.

⁴⁰⁸ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 78.

to remain where they were so that a testimony could be borne to their superiors. A Roman Catholic priest in Bavaria, J.E.G.Lutz, recalled,

As soon as I was firmly convinced that the work was the work of the Lord, I should have liked to serve in the churches under the rule of apostles, but they dissuaded me from it. They said that it was my duty to keep to the place which God had given me in His Church, and there to do the work for which the Lord had set me there. As soon as complaints were brought against me, and I knew that I should not be allowed to remain any longer in the Roman Church, I again thought of escaping from the difficulties which were before me, by seeking a position within the Apostolic Churches; but the apostles considered that I ought to appeal, in the first place, to the archbishop, and then to the pope, so that they, too, might have the testimony borne to them.⁴⁰⁹

Such action was perceived by several bishops as presenting a conflict of allegiance and so several clergy were deposed, in particular in the Protestant Episcopal Church of the U.S.A. Their published defences were another important *genre* of Catholic Apostolic literature, providing valuable insight into relationships with other churches.

J.S.Davenport (who was deposed in the early 1850s) justified recognition of restored apostles as compatible with existing canonical loyalties and as answering the needs expressed by those seceding to Rome:

The acknowledgement of apostles does not involve separation from the Episcopal Church, while it will satisfy all the feelings of want which the discussion of principles has awakened. It will furnish a *point of rest*, which will enable conscientious men, who feel the inefficiency and incompleteness of the system in which they are placed, to continue to discharge their duties in the fear of God, until his providence shall open the way for their reaching a more complete and satisfactory position.⁴¹⁰

It is doubtful whether this lukewarm attitude to the system, with its implication that those who accepted the apostles were looking for a move, reassured many bishops.

Clergy who accepted the work were sometimes no happier. Norton saw no inherent contradiction between remaining within the Church of England and submitting to the restored apostles:

... the rebuilding of the Catholic Apostolic Church, is not in antagonism to other Christian communities, but is a centre for their union; neither does communion with the Apostles ... require that any unless specially called or circumstanced, should abandon any station of life or sphere of duty, so long as they can serve God faithfully and effectually in it.

However, he resigned his living because he felt that his bishop was not in sympathy with his views.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁹ L.W.Scholler, *A Chapter of Church History from South Germany, being passages from the life of Johan Evangelist Georg Lutz*, 216-7.

⁴¹⁰ [J.S.Davenport], *Secessions to Rome*, 11, cf. 8-9.

⁴¹¹ Norton, *Restoration* (1854), 9.

Though forced to set up a separate structure, Catholic Apostolics defended themselves vigorously against the charge of schism. Woodhouse pointed out they had been forced out, and although a visible witness to God's order for the church was necessary, it would not always exist apart from the existing churches.⁴¹² If existing churches rejected apostles and prophets, God should be free to raise up churches in which such would be able to exercise their ministry.⁴¹³ The formation of such congregations was not the apostles' primary aim, and neither was the Catholic Apostolic Church to be seen as the centre for the union of Christendom (a significant change from earlier thought).⁴¹⁴ Separate congregations were needed to care for those whose clergy did not accept the restoration of apostles, and to carry out the ministry of intercession committed to apostles.⁴¹⁵ The acts of confession and absolution in the liturgy were not intended to benefit those gathered under apostles alone; the whole church was present by representation, and the liturgy was offered in the power of the same Spirit who indwelt the whole body of Christ.⁴¹⁶

In spite of the rejection experienced by the movement, Cardale reiterated its mature viewpoint in response to prophecies around 1860 regarding the separation of believers from established churches and sects, explaining that separation from Babylon was a matter of heart rather than of ecclesiastical connection:

The withdrawal from communion with the Established Churches is in many cases neither desirable nor expedient at the present time; the coming out of Babylon does not imply necessarily the separation of all who believe, nor even of all those who receive the Sealing through the Laying on of Apostles' Hands from the communion of the Established Churches; such a step would be directly opposed to the spirit of the Testimony already delivered to the Heads in Church and State by the Apostles.⁴¹⁷

However, widespread disregard for the movement's claims and message led to a third phase of thought concerning relations with existing churches. Following their initial condemnation of Christendom, and then their desire to learn all they could from the wider church, they returned to a relatively isolationist position. An examination of Cardale's assessment of the situation in 1865 bears this out. Rationalising the disappointment of their early hopes, he pointed out that the powers of this world had always been opposed to Christ⁴¹⁸ and alleged that the apostles had been rejected because the churches feared the loss of worldly privileges (thus showing the extent of their past apostasy).⁴¹⁹ Disappointed members were told to drop their own

⁴¹² [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 104.

⁴¹³ Norton, *Restoration* (1854), 10.

⁴¹⁴ [Cardale], *Character*, 39.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 34-5.

⁴¹⁶ [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.459-60.

⁴¹⁷ Cardale, "Notes of Lectures", 4.

⁴¹⁸ [Cardale], *Character*, 22.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

expectations regarding God's plan for the work in the period before Christ's return.⁴²⁰ Such an approach was to become characteristic of the movement.

4.3 Assessment

It is important to understand that when these groups described the church as apostate or ruined, they were referring to the visible church on earth, Christendom or the "great house", and that the ruin burdened them as it did because they saw a much closer link between the visible church and the body of Christ than had many evangelicals. The formation of para-church organisations to express unity could be no substitute for the lost unity of the divinely-instituted organisation, the church. Brethren (of both types) and Catholic Apostolics all saw the loss of visible unity as a major part of the church's ruin.⁴²¹

Running through both Brethren and Catholic Apostolic thought regarding the church's ruin has been the belief that the situation was beyond human ability to effect a remedy; if anything was to be done, God must do it. Both emphasised the need for submission to God in the face of the church's condition, seeking to lead those awakened to feel the ruin and respond in humiliation before God, rather than resorting to human expedients in a self-sufficient attempt to shore up what was being demolished; vagueness regarding what action the faithful remnant should take, and emphasis on submission to God, marked the practice of both Darby and Drummond. Differences emerged over whether or not it was God's declared purpose to do anything to restore the church, and if so, what.

The belief that divine intervention was necessary to sort out the ruined church was one which radical evangelicals would have shared. Desire for such divine inbreaking was, we have seen, part of the Romantic outlook which was becoming widespread. It was also evidence of the fact that the church was perceived as in an abnormal state of existence, a state which called for exceptional measures. Catholic Apostolics would have seen the restoration of the gift of prophecy which preceded the emergence of the apostleship as exceptional, but justified it by appealing to the state of the church: God had to start somewhere. Darby would have seen the measures which he advocated as a response to the church's state, replacing those directions suited to its normative state as seen in the New Testament under apostles. Both sides condemned the formation of new churches at some point, although Catholic Apostolics were forced by circumstances to drop this belief and Darby's later practice is not always easy to reconcile with it. All

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 2.

⁴²¹ Perhaps despair at achieving visible unity contributed to Darby's belief that the church's ruin was irreparable: Neatby commented that because Darby saw the church's outward form as essential to its continuing testimony, and could not conceive of unity in terms which could not be given outward form, he considered the church ruined when the outward form failed to represent the inward reality (Neatby, 89-90).

this fits as part of the radicalising of Calvinistically-based thinking among post-Revolution evangelicals, a process which owed more than most of its participants realised to the wider climate of thought.⁴²²

The stress on human inability and divine sovereignty is at the heart of Calvinist soteriology, and it is illuminating to examine the ecclesiologies of these movements with an eye to soteriological parallels. Darby's ecclesiology could be seen as an application of his belief that what God did in individual salvation was not to renew the old man but to create a new man. This is confirmed by an undated writing on 1 Corinthians 2, "Christ and the Spirit", in which he stated that:

What ruined the church (that is, as a thing in man's hand, not of course God's work) was, that the sense of complete redemption was quite lost; the fact, I mean, that man does not stand before God in his condition as a child of Adam at all, but in Christ, after Christ has done God's work for him. ... Consequent on this work which He has done, we can say we have died with Him: and He is our life. ^{a.m.} 423

Death, not improvement, was the destiny of the old man, as the individual was born again.⁴²⁴

That soteriological parallels are a legitimate tool for interpreting Catholic Apostolic and Brethren ecclesiology is corroborated by the shared belief that each dispensation was intended to show man's sinful state, that he might become deeply convinced of his need and look to divine grace to perform what human ability could not: the history of the church was that of the individual writ large. That which was of God would be perfected; that which was not, destroyed.

Just as salvation was seen in terms of replacement rather than renovation, therefore, so was ecclesiology: Baxter's prophecies appear to have been based on the belief that the "spiritual church" which God was going to bring to birth would replace the existing apostate church, rather than representing a renewal of it. There were also parallels in the justifications advanced by all parties for their secession. Like the Reformers, and the participants in the Albury Conferences, who sought "as Protestant Catholic Christians" to prove that Rome was the eschatological apostasy⁴²⁵, Darby had to deny the right of the body from which he had seceded to the title "church" in order to clear himself of the charge of schism. In line with this condemnation (which was extended to all existing churches as rejected by God), Darby and Irving came to anticipate the

⁴²² Cf. D.N.Hempton, "Evangelicals and Eschatology", *JEH* 31 (1980): 179-94.

⁴²³ Darby, *CW*, 21.209; cf. 15.271.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.295.

⁴²⁵ [H.Drummond], ed., *Dialogues*, 2.244.

rapture of believers from the apostate and rejected world with which Christendom had become identified.⁴²⁶

A significant factor accounting for similarities in approach, which related to the parallels with soteriology drawn above, was the common roots of these movements in contemporary Calvinist evangelicalism.⁴²⁷ Admittedly, Darby's more traditional Calvinism contrasts with that of McLeod Campbell (which influenced Catholic Apostolics *via* Irving, whose initially orthodox Calvinist interpretation of the doctrine of election had been strongly modified by Campbell's reworking of it), but all appear to have been influenced by Calvinist thought.⁴²⁸ It is also true that Campbell's rejection of the prevailing Scottish interpretation of Calvinist doctrine produced a more optimistic idea of human capability in Catholic Apostolic thought⁴²⁹, but their ecclesiology was at odds with this with its emphasis on human inability to bring about God's purpose.

The difference between Darby and Catholic Apostolics, then, did not relate to human capability, but to divine intention. Maury, a critic of both movements, commented that Irvingism and Darbyism had the same starting point - the apostolic church's divine organisation and early fall - but that while Irvingism sought a return to apostolic institutions, Darbyism viewed man as having no right to do so and rejected the legitimacy of ecclesiastical organisation.⁴³⁰ To avoid over-simplification, however, we must remember that both attached great importance to an awareness of the times in which they lived as seen from the perspective of the divine purpose. Both (in common with many others at that time) insisted that the church had become almost unrecognisable when compared with the New Testament picture of the ideal church, and that God's purpose for their times was not identical to His purpose for believers when the church was founded. Both insisted on the need for believers concerned about the church's condition to look to God for Him to lead them. Both claimed to find in

⁴²⁶ In qualification, it must be stated that whereas Darby anticipated the rapture of all Christians, Catholic Apostolics taught that only some would be raptured. According to Cardale, if the church had remained faithful, it would have been translated as a body; now, only the firstfruits (those who accepted God's work by apostles) would be translated, others being left behind to endure the Great Tribulation ([Cardale], *Notes of Lectures*, 43-4).

⁴²⁷ A more extreme form of Calvinism appeared in Philpot's hyper-Calvinist soteriology, which resembles Darby's ecclesiology: he was converted through Darby while they were both in Dublin ([Darby], *Letters*, 3.198 (27th July 1881)), and Darby's views on human inability were already well-formed by then, not least through the inner conflict preceding his "deliverance". However, Philpot did not extend his hyper-Calvinism to ecclesiology, seeing the formation of churches as a legitimate, even essential, activity.

⁴²⁸ We must not press the comparison too far, since some of Darby's followers (such as the Methodist Trotter) did not have the same Calvinistic background.

⁴²⁹ Cf. "Great Testimony", §5, and Irving's suggested alterations to Craig's Catechism of 1592 (used at Regent Square) in *Confessions of Faith*, cxxvi-cxxvii.

⁴³⁰ Maury, 2.272-3.

Scripture directions for the time in which they lived. Darby (like Baxter) held that the church was irreparably ruined, and that it was futile to attempt to restore it; indeed (as Catholic Apostolics agreed) such was always the outcome in each dispensation of God's dealings with mankind. Darby believed that the church's original order had been replaced with one suited to its ruined state, and he gave the groups which had sprung up in Dublin, Geneva and elsewhere a theological *rationale* for their provisional character.

By contrast, Brethren such as Groves believed that restoration among a faithful remnant of the New Testament pattern of church life and order was possible, even though the dispensation itself was ruined, as did later Catholic Apostolic writers ^{with} reference to the universal church. They held that God's purpose was to restore the church's original ordinances (if not the dispensation as a whole), building on the foundation laid by New Testament apostles: the order which suited the local church in its ruined state was precisely that according to which it had been constituted at the beginning. Yet, after early openness to the possibility, Open Brethren also came to recognise that the supernatural gifts were no longer present in the church, and to acknowledge the yawning gap left by the absence of apostles. In practice, therefore, they agreed with Darby that the universal church was ruined; the difference between the two sections of Brethrenism was more apparent than real, caused by the Open emphasis on the local church in contrast with the Exclusive emphasis on the universal. All denied that any truly apostolic church still existed, but Darby denied the possibility of recovery, while Open Brethren interpreted it differently from Catholic Apostolics.

A later Exclusive writer, C.A.Coates, alleged that it was Open Brethren who had built their system upon a concept of the ruin of the assembly, by which he meant the church in its universal aspect. He accurately summarised the difference between the Exclusive emphasis on the universal church, and that of Open Brethren on the local:

... in the revival of the truth over a century ago, what was prominent in the minds of the spiritual was the truth of the assembly. ... The coming together of saints was to be in the light of those features which pertain to the assembly universally. ... The brethren who were spiritually instructed had no such thought as that it was the divine intent that the assembly in its universal aspect should be, or should become, invisible. On the contrary, they felt deeply the fact that it had become so ...

But alongside this revival of Paul's doctrine there was developing amongst the brethren an entirely different system of teaching. There were those who held that the assembly in its universal aspect had become invisible, and that nothing now remained but to set up local assemblies, each being a self-contained body ... The truth of *the* assembly in its general unity, calling for recognition in a practical way by those who have the light of it, thus entirely lost its due place. ...

There were thus two different conceptions in the minds of brethren. One was governed by the thought of the unity of the whole assembly as one body, one

house, one temple, and by the thought of all the saints everywhere being called to one universal fellowship. The other was based on the idea of each meeting being an independent "assembly".⁴³¹

Of course, the relative importance of the local and universal aspects of the church was not the primary reason for the difference between Open Brethren and Darby: behind it lay his high-church background, which meant that he could assert that office had failed and probably could not be restored without apostles, whereas Open Brethren did not need to do so, although they did not minimise the significance of the loss of apostles.⁴³²

Later Catholic Apostolics considered that although the historic churches were severely affected by the loss of apostles, they were still true churches, whereas Darby and those influenced by Baxter's prophecies had held that they were not. The latter were less ready to acknowledge the Spirit's working in and through distorted structures, and (like Walker) more insistent on the need to withdraw from any ecclesiological system which was incorrectly constituted. The separatist views of Irving and Baxter did not carry the day within Irvingism, and Brethren saw Irvingite willingness to remain in existing churches as compromising: one writer likened them to the Mormons because of their willingness to denounce the apostate church and yet to counsel awakened individuals to remain therein until it was convenient to secede, advice which was seen as betokening more concern with separation to their movement than separation from evil.⁴³³ However, later Irvingites would have felt at home with Groves' insistence that where Christ was present they could remain, even though there was much that was disordered: their change in attitude towards Christendom was seen in the shifting from the present to the future of the call to leave Babylon, or else their making it a matter of inward disposition as opposed to external membership.

Their differing attitudes to the world were reflected in the fact that while Brethren saw the parochial system as clear evidence of the church's ruined condition, Catholic Apostolics saw establishment of religion as fundamental to proper recognition of Christ's rule, adducing the failure of the civil powers to uphold the establishment of Christianity as evidence of the church's ruin. Irving stood somewhat uneasily between the two: having initially espoused the establishment principle, he came to view the church in practice as a gathered congregation of the faithful, pushing back any prospect of establishment of true religion until after the millennium.⁴³⁴ While influential

⁴³¹ From an undated paper "The Principles of Christian Fellowship", in Gardiner, 78-80.

⁴³² The less literalistic approach of Open Brethren to interpreting Scripture would have made attempts at local restoration seem more feasible.

⁴³³ "Mormonism in America", *CWit* 5 (1838): 37.

⁴³⁴ However, this could have co-existed with a belief in establishment as the normative state of the church, in the same way that the Free Church of Scotland could exist apart from the establishment while nevertheless upholding the establishment principle: it was a response to an abnormal situation.

figures such as Armstrong and Baxter reiterated Irving's pessimistic views, the shift in Catholic Apostolic apologetic from a negative to a more respectful (if not always more positive) view of established churches may be construed as an outworking of their belief in the need for order in all aspects of human society: since the institutions of church and state were divinely ordained, God (and His human instruments) would not bypass them in His work of restoration. What such restoration was to involve in the way of a recovery of apostolicity will be seen in the next chapter.

5. APOSTLESHIP AND THE CHURCH

The concept of apostleship is widely acknowledged to be crucial to an understanding of Catholic Apostolic ecclesiology and self-definition, for the movement described itself as "gathered under apostles". What has not really been recognised is that recognition of Darby's understanding of the nature and functions of apostles goes a long way towards explaining his approach to ministry; thus it is important to note the place which he gave to apostles in his exposition of Pauline ecclesiology.

5.1. Brethren

Darby was the main creative thinker on this issue among the Brethren, although others engaged in critiques of Irvingism. He articulated his understanding of the place of apostles in the church in the context of his doctrine of the church's ruin, a doctrine which owed a great deal to his high-church background, with its emphasis on visible order and apostolic succession. While gifts remained (since ministry was based on gift rather than office), government (united with gifting in the case of the apostles) did not¹; thus positions of authority in the church, established and sanctioned by apostles, no longer existed.² Apostles tended, therefore, to assume importance in negative terms; Darby showed the size of the gap left by their disappearance, but did not believe it would be filled.

5.1.1. *Apostles as a foundational ministry*

In "On Ministry: its Nature, Source, Power, and Responsibility" (which from its position in his *Collected Writings* may be dated to the early 1840s)³ Darby described the Ephesians 4 ministries as "more especially gifts of ministry, of service rendered to Christ in His body ..." ⁴ He considered that apostles and prophets constituted the church's foundation, but that evangelists, pastors and teachers were intended to continue until the church was perfected.⁵ We may compare his understanding with that of Calvin, who wrote of apostles, prophets and evangelists that

... these three functions were not established in the church as permanent ones ... I do not deny that the Lord has sometimes at a later period raised up apostles, or at least evangelists in their place, as has happened in our own day. For there was need for such persons to lead the church back from the rebellion of Antichrist. Nonetheless, I call the office "extraordinary," because in duly constituted churches it has no place.⁶

¹ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.138 (24th September 1846).

² *Ibid.*, 1.289-90 (27th May 1854).

³ Darby, *CW*, 1.206-32.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.223.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.147.

⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.3.4.

In particular, it will become apparent that Darby's understanding of what we may call "secondary" apostles paralleled Calvin's view of evangelists, raised up in exceptional circumstances of the church and directly commissioned by God.

Writing in 1843, Darby hinted at a face-to-face confrontation between himself and Irving on the subject of the distinction between foundational ministries and those building on the foundation: "It was at least fourteen years ago that I insisted on these very things with Mr. Irving, before the system to which he gave his name was manifested."⁷ Apostles and prophets,

... in the exercise of their highest functions, have laid the foundation of the church, either by revelation, or by the authority of Christ, which was committed to them; for it is by this last that the apostles were distinguished from prophets. A prophet revealed the mind of God, and his work was, in this respect, finished. An apostle was sent direct, as an architect, authorised by Christ to build His church. They ordained, put in execution, took the oversight, governed, established authorities in the churches, and took cognisance, as having authority, of everything that went on in them, in order to regulate it; in a word, they were authorised, on the part of Christ, to found and to build, and to establish rules in His church.⁸

While the ministry of prophets was one of revelation, that of apostles was one of authority in church-planting, appointment to office, and regulation. Such foundational ministries were associated with giving to the church, not witnessing by the church: they were "Christ giving to the Church to minister on the ground of union - entrance into communion with His fulness."⁹ Apostles were not primarily to be seen as part of the body (though they exercised their functions within it): their ministry logically preceded it, since by them it was gathered.¹⁰ Similarly, Calvin viewed the foundation of apostles and prophets referred to in Ephesians 2.20 as logically prior to the church built thereon.¹¹ The church was not to be seen, therefore, as the source of ministry, since ministry (of apostles and evangelists) was what created it.¹² Evangelists exercised a parallel ministry to that of apostles in gathering though not in regulating.¹³

Darby admitted that apostles in the primary sense had all disappeared; however, a principle was introduced upon the dispersion of the Jewish church order of individual action according to the Spirit's energy, which explained why apostles and prophets

⁷ Darby, *CW*, 3.264.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.224. Cf. Calvin on apostles: "Their office was to publish the doctrine of the Gospel throughout the whole world, to plant churches, and to erect the Kingdom of Christ." (*Calvin's Commentaries. The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, 179 (on Ephesians 4.11-14))

⁹ Darby, *CW*, 3.139.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.7.2.

¹² Darby, *CW*, 1.219.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 3.140; cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.3.5.

could still exist in a subordinate sense¹⁴; 'apostle' merely meant 'one sent', and in particular directly sent by Christ.¹⁵

That which seems to designate the character of apostle, is the being directly sent of Christ, raised up to act on his own personal responsibility to Christ ... In this sense, while the authoritative primary revelation of God's will, gathering and regulating the Church, has clearly closed in the scriptural record to apostolic ministry, I do not see but that apostolic service may still subsist, and probably has been exercised, though the name may not have been attached; men raised up and sent by God for a certain mission ...¹⁶

The church could not have tried apostles (Revelation 2.2) if there had been only the twelve and Paul; thus the reference to apostles in Ephesians 4.11 was taken to mean others than the twelve, who had been appointed before Christ's exaltation.¹⁷ Among such Darby cited Barnabas and Andronicus and Junias (Romans 16.7).¹⁸ Such an apostle

... may act under an extraordinary responsibility as sent by God, and by a faith which depends upon communications made only to him who enjoys them (although there can be no new truth, which would not be found in the word) - a line of conduct which is only vindicated in the eyes of others, by its resulting in blessing to the children of God.¹⁹

Since no new revelation was possible, and since the description of such apostles as extraordinary implies that they were not part of the regular order of things, Darby must have seen them as immediately called by God to restore to the church's experience something of the foundation of truth which had been lost or overlaid. This is confirmed by his citing as examples Luther, Calvin and Zwingli.

Calvin believed concerning apostles, prophets and evangelists that "... God now and again revives them as the need of the times demands."²⁰ Strictly speaking, only the twelve and Paul were apostles.²¹ His references to God reviving apostleship are to be interpreted, therefore, as referring to the reappearance of evangelists²², who continued the apostles' work. Referring to Luther, he wrote: "... I do not deny that the Lord has sometimes at a later period raised up apostles, or at least evangelists in their place, as has happened in our own day."²³

¹⁴ Darby, *CW*, 1.224.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.140. Cf. Calvin's assertion that all ministers could be called 'apostles', as they were sent by Christ as His messengers (*Institutes*, IV.3.5).

¹⁶ Darby, *CW*, 3.141-2.

¹⁷ Darby, *Synopsis*, 4.317.

¹⁸ Darby, *CW*, 1.224; cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.3.5.

¹⁹ Darby, *CW*, 1.224.

²⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.3.4.

²¹ Calvin, *Commentary on Ephesians*, 179 (on 4.11-14).

²² *Ibid.*, 180.

²³ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.3.4; cf. *Commentary on Ephesians*, 180.

Darby's ministry and self-understanding would have given him reason to cite himself as an apostle in this sense, although he stopped short of accepting such a designation²⁴: he appears to have had an increasing sense of having been given a quasi-apostolic ministry for the last days, manifest in the way that he functioned as an evangelist, authoritative teacher, troubleshooter and consultant. This may explain his intense reaction towards opposition.²⁵ Darby's life mirrored that of his hero, Paul, whom he considered more Christlike in public ministry than anyone else on earth, rejected by men and yet aware of his heavenly position.²⁶ According to Newton, F.W.Newman "spoke extravagantly of Darby to us as a new Apostle"²⁷, while Newman himself later recalled Darby's power of attraction upon his hearers:

... I began to ask: what will *he* say to this and that? In *his* reply I always expected to find a higher portion of God's Spirit, than in any I could frame for myself. In order to learn divine truth, it became to me a surer process to consult him, than to search for myself and wait upon God ... Indeed, but for a few weaknesses which warned me that he might err, I could have accepted him as an apostle commissioned to reveal the mind of God.²⁸

Newton wrote to Darby while he was abroad in 1843/4, calling him an apostle.²⁹ Darby had exercised apostolic leadership in Switzerland, where one critic commented that the assemblies' rejection of organisation left him as their only centre of unity, and sought to assume a similar role on returning to Plymouth.³⁰ His long international itineraries demonstrated, according to Andrew Miller, his "truly apostolic spirit".³¹ Perhaps most significant is the fact that the *Bethesda Circular* was issued in his name alone, an action which the author of the *Retrospect of Events* compared with the actions of the papacy.³²

Howard alleged that Darbyite discipline was based on Darby (the apostle) as the centre of unity.³³ Events confirm that impression, as does his followers' estimate of him as one to whom much truth concerning the church and biblical prophecy was "revealed"; what they accorded to him was accorded by Catholic Apostolics to their apostles. His role within Brethrenism in leadership, planting of assemblies, writing in defence of his doctrines, and discipline was such that 'apostle' was the only category into which many commentators could place him: Howard described him as "their apostle"³⁴, while

²⁴ J.P.Ward, 15.

²⁵ Coad, *History*, 87.

²⁶ Darby, *Synopsis*, 4.53, 61.

²⁷ "Fry MS", 251.

²⁸ F.W.Newman, 33.

²⁹ Darby, *CW*, 20.19.

³⁰ Herzog, 24; Smith, "Darby in Switzerland", 76.

³¹ A.Miller, *Brethren*, 35.

³² *Retrospect of Events*, 22.

³³ Howard, *Caution*, 33.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

an Irish cleric testified to the power of Darby "who, I have heard you say, knows more of the mind of God than any one else, and who is called an *apostle* amongst you ..."35

Those associated with Bethesda had less to say regarding apostleship. Writing in 1835 (possibly against Tractarian ideas) Groves denied the necessity of apostolic appointment or ratification of appointment to church office in New Testament times, and therefore now:

[In the New Testament] ... you will never find the apostles pretending to any peculiar power of appointing to the ministry in Christ's church at large, nor to any power at all of excluding: you will find that they never assumed or exercised this power themselves; nor ever transmitted it to any; that the only method for distinguishing a true from a false teacher, recommended in Scripture or used by the apostles, is, *by inspecting his life and doctrine*: and that the idea of apostolic appointment or any other, is never alluded to even as *conjointly* required.³⁶

What mattered was not official authorisation to minister, but whether the individual was spiritually gifted and whether his life and doctrine were in tune with Scripture. In dealing with his opponents, Paul never asked whether they had apostolic authorisation to teach, but confined himself to confuting their doctrinal error.³⁷ The Jerusalem apostles when they met Paul sought only to know his message and gifts; they were not concerned with his miracles or his ordination.³⁸ Ministers in the New Testament appointed nobody.³⁹ Even if the apostles had possessed such rights, it would prove nothing about the rights of their non-apostolic successors.⁴⁰ However, Groves admitted that a minister would be more *enabled* (as opposed to *authorised*) to serve if apostles were still in existence to communicate the Spirit's gifts.⁴¹

Though he became a zealous follower of Darby, Wigram early expressed the belief that the New Testament furnished believers with a pattern on which to attempt to model local church life, restoration to which was to be their desire even though restoration of the whole professing church would never occur.⁴² He saw all the Ephesians 4 ministries as intended to continue⁴³: God had maintained His gifts to the church but it wilfully refused to accept or use them.⁴⁴ Wigram disapproved of Irvingites for conceding legitimacy to apostolic succession, which ran contrary to the principle of

35 J.D'Arcy Sirr, *Reasons for Abiding in the Established Church: a letter to the Rev. Charles Hargrove, A.B.*, 29.

36 A.N.Groves, *Liberty*, 10.

37 *Ibid.*, 14-5.

38 *Ibid.*, 16.

39 *Ibid.*, 18.

40 *Ibid.*, 11.

41 *Ibid.*, 49-50.

42 [Wigram], "Verity of Revival", 154.

43 *Ibid.*, 166-7.

44 *Ibid.*, 178.

this dispensation, that of direct calling by God⁴⁵, and condemned them for accepting men so ordained while rejecting those ordained by the Spirit alone.⁴⁶

Craik treated the apostles in Acts primarily as examples to follow, rather than as occupying an office essential to church order; believers could not be apostles, but they could follow their example of spiritual grace.⁴⁷ Apostles were at first the only ministers to have a recognised position.⁴⁸ However, they disappeared at the end of the first century⁴⁹; believers were to draw from the New Testament not a code of church polity, but "historical facts, Apostolic examples, and leading principles."⁵⁰ This was to become the main Open Brethren view; not only did they differ from Darby in asserting that the directions in the New Testament were still to be followed, but they interpreted them more freely.

5.1.2. *The Jewish and Gentile apostolates*

In "The Character of Office in the Present Dispensation", Darby contended that the rejection of the New Testament apostles showed the cessation of the Jewish arrangement of earthly and derivative order. Christ should have been received by the Jews and He gave derived authority to the apostles, but after their rejection the dispensation assumed a new character. Paul as apostle to the Gentiles did not derive his order or gospel from the Jewish apostles, but by revelation. "He is the type of the dispensation. Every dispensation has its character, from the manner in which Christ is manifested and introduced in it; and its order from Him under whom it takes its rise as to ministration."⁵¹ Darby understood Paul's self-designation as "one untimely born" to mean that he had no connection with the previous order; there had been a break in successional authority.⁵² The twelve as apostles "did not, in that state, constitute a part of the dispensation of gift, and authority by gift, of which he was the minister and expounder. This was associated with the ascended glory of Christ ..." So Paul was not called as one knowing Christ after the flesh.⁵³ Instead of his apostolic authority being established by Christ in person, Paul was constituted an apostle by the Spirit's power.⁵⁴

This, then, was the calling of Paul, a sovereign calling by grace, revealing the Son in him - one born out of due time; and this when the church was entirely

⁴⁵ Ibid., 181.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 176.

⁴⁷ Craik, *New Testament Church Order*, 20.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 58-9.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 2; cf. A.N.Groves, *Liberty*, 80-1.

⁵¹ Darby, *CW*, 1.98.

⁵² Ibid., 1.99.

⁵³ Ibid., 1.100.

⁵⁴ Darby, *Synopsis*, 4.42.

heavenly, entirely underived, and necessarily rejecting derivation, or he would have denied the character of his calling, and lost the authority of his mission; for the Jewish things would have remained. It was heavenly, underivative, of grace, and by revelation, and that of the glory, and drew all its character and all its evidence from this ..."55

Yet in spite of the unique glory of the revelation which Paul received concerning the body, Darby implied that Paul's call to apostleship was itself a response to failure - that of the Jewish apostles to fulfil their commission to preach the gospel to all nations (evident in Acts 8.1 where the believers were "all scattered abroad ... except the apostles").56

In "The Apostleship of St. Paul"57, Harris asserted that the order and significance of events in Acts 1-12 were intended to prepare believers for the introduction of God's purposes for the Gentiles, to be fulfilled through Paul: first the Jewish apostolate was completed (Acts 1), and then Jewish rejection of the gospel paved the way for the revelation of the heavenly glory which was the church's portion, as had happened with the rejected Christ (Acts 2-7).58 Until Stephen's martyrdom, the church's "earth-rejected and earth-rejecting character" had not been fully revealed.59 Saul's call was seen as illustrating the principle of ministry which lay behind this dispensation: commissioned directly from heaven, he did not need to confer with the existing apostles.60 His apostleship was a trial to the Jewish church because it was without respect to their order.61

Newton took a more traditional line: he opposed the idea that the apostleship of Paul was on a higher level than that of the twelve as dangerous; all apostles were equally Christian, and their writings equally binding on the church: believers dared not write off the instructions given to them and through them as belonging to the Jewish dispensation and therefore not applicable.62

5.1.3. Apostolic succession

We have seen that apostolic succession was a live issue for Darby during his early high-church period as, drawn to Roman Catholicism, he sought to reassure himself of the validity of Anglican orders. He retained a high view of apostolic prerogatives after his "deliverance": apostles in the primary sense were unique, on account of the signs

55 Darby, *CW*, 1.101.

56 *Ibid.*, 1.128; cf. *idem*, *Synopsis*, 4.62.

57 [J.L.Harris], "The Apostleship of St. Paul", *CWit* 4 (1837): 221-50.

58 *Ibid.*, 221-2.

59 *Ibid.*, 226.

60 *Ibid.*, 229, 238. Kelly described Paul as "Apart from and towering over the twelve" (*Six Lectures*, 177).

61 [Harris], "Apostleship of St. Paul", 240.

62 B.W.Newton, *Propositions for the solemn consideration of Christians*, X.

attending their ministry, their appointment by revelation, and their having seen Christ. Apart from extraordinary divine action, charismata were conferred by apostles alone.⁶³ Indeed, they transmitted not only gifts but the Spirit Himself.⁶⁴ They were also uniquely inspired to act as legislators for the church. However, their ministry was not intended to be continued: "power is never a tradition."⁶⁵

Although opposition to the notion of apostolic succession was not the original motivating factor in Brethren beginnings⁶⁶, it became evident in Darby's thought by 1834, probably the time of his final secession:

Let the following words of the apostle be considered by those who, in common with the Roman Catholics, maintain this promise to be verified in what they term "apostolic succession"; "For I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them," Acts 20. Such was Paul's view of apostolic succession, and one which, in principle, applied to the whole church, as it sank down together, after the decease of the apostles.⁶⁷

The twelve expected no continuance of their ministry, since each dispensation was put on test to see what it did with the deposit of truth given it at its beginning, and a continuing stream of revelation through apostolic succession would run contrary to this.⁶⁸ Logically, opposition to apostolic succession was bound up with the disjunction between the heavenly church (in which authority was directly conferred) and earthly Israel (in which it was derived by succession).

Darby pointed out that in Galatians 1-2 Paul asserted that the other apostles could add nothing to his commission and authority, and that he withstood them for insisting on old ordinances; in Paul the Spirit's energy broke through the apostolic succession⁶⁹: "... God was securing in every way, that human dependence, human derivation should be broken in upon; for its place was gone in the earth."⁷⁰ Even when Paul and Barnabas were sent out on a definite mission, their authority was not derived from men, but from the Spirit (Acts 13).⁷¹ Apostolic succession was always derived from Peter (which implied the Jewish principle of derived authority, since he was apostle to the

⁶³ Darby, *CW*, 4.357.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.251.

⁶⁵ Darby, *Synopsis*, 4.53.

⁶⁶ [Darby], *Letters*, 1.624-5 (Memorandum of 1868).

⁶⁷ Darby, *CW*, 1.72. Like Darby, Borlase alleged a sudden and dramatic decline in spirituality by the time of the apostolic fathers ("The Apostolical Fathers", *CW* 1 (1834): 416).

⁶⁸ Darby, *CW*, 3.140.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.102.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.103.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Jews), never from Paul, from whom the dispensation took its character.⁷² Timothy and Titus could not be advanced as arguments for apostolic succession, since they were not bishops with derived authority, but temporary deputies appointed to set churches in order - Paul's assistants, not his successors.⁷³ Clearly Darby had no option but to reject apostolic succession. It was not consistent with the New Testament evidence, its eschatological ethos, or the rejection of the twelve: "while the present care of the church was exactly what would be consistent with the looking for the coming of the Lord, which possessed the mind of the apostle, the arrangement of prospective provision by derivative authority for future ages was wholly inconsistent with it."⁷⁴ Even when Paul became aware that his apostolic work was finished, he made no provision at Ephesus for the appointment of a successor.⁷⁵ Likewise Peter did not expect further apostles to be raised up after his death, nor did he set up an ecclesiastical succession to guard the faith and function as the foundation of authority, but gave instructions to the churches in his letters.⁷⁶

Apostolic succession was a tacit admission that the economy had not continued in its original condition; therefore either God's purpose had been frustrated, or God did not actually intend it to do so.⁷⁷ Darby believed the latter, but gave his argument a novel twist by setting it in a dispensational context: "if the Scriptures plainly testify the apostasy of the dispensation, that which professes to provide for and secure its successional continuance must be a lie of the enemy."⁷⁸ Succession was the mark of apostasy sanctioned and therefore perpetuated, "for if the church has failed ... the provision of its perpetuation becomes the provision for the perpetuation of the failure, and the maintenance of the object of the Lord's sure judgment."⁷⁹ Protestantism could not prove its title to an apostolic ministry without at the same time *a fortiori* validating that of Roman Catholicism⁸⁰, a conclusion which had proved unacceptable to others before him. Discounting apostolic tradition as being at best imitation of the apostles, he summarised the duty of believers as not imitation but obedience within a changed situation, for which an adequate revelation of God's will had been provided in Scripture.⁸¹

⁷² Ibid., 1.107; cf. Hargrove, *Reasons for Retiring*, 45. Thus Darby also opposed the idea of a clerical class as appointed by men, even if not of men (*Synopsis*, 4.257n).

⁷³ Darby, *CW*, 1.107-8.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1.109.

⁷⁵ Darby, *Synopsis*, 4.57; cf. W.Kelly, *Six Lectures*, 196.

⁷⁶ Darby, *Synopsis*, 5.309.

⁷⁷ Darby, *CW*, 4.340.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 1.113-4. Calvin denied that apostolic succession could guarantee apostolicity (George, 143).

⁷⁹ Darby, *CW*, 1.123.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 1.49.

⁸¹ Ibid., 3.140.

5.2. Catholic Apostolic

In the preface to *The Substance of a Ministry of the Office of Apostle in the Gentile Church*, based on lectures originally given in 1834, Woodhouse admitted that at that time there was no clear knowledge of the nature and duties of apostleship, nor of the distinct duties of the four ministries.⁸² After the events of 1840, however, we see an explosion in the volume of literature explaining the nature and function of the restored apostolate. In contrast to the relative lack of consideration given to apostolic order in Open Brethren thinking, Catholic Apostolics could almost be said to subsume all their ecclesiology under this category.

5.2.1. *The first twelve and the last twelve*

Because apostles were the ordinance for maintaining unity in the church through bestowing the one Spirit, teaching the one faith, and preserving the oneness of the body through their rule, their number must be limited, since "rule cannot stand in an undefined or unlimited number." Only twelve could occupy the apostolic office at any one time.⁸³ Catholic Apostolics saw the twenty-four elders in Revelation 4 as comprising the original twelve and their restored twelve, bracketing the Christian dispensation between them; together these would exercise Christ's authority as rulers and judges.⁸⁴ Often quoted was Isaiah 1.26: "I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning ..." ⁸⁵ It was as much God's purpose to have a twelvefold apostleship to the Gentiles as to the Jews.⁸⁶ The first twelve had been sent to the Jews, and the last twelve to the Gentiles; John, as the last of the original twelve, was seen as prefiguring the last apostleship, and to him was given the history of the church in Revelation.⁸⁷ Paul also was seen as belonging to the Gentile apostleship; to him was given the full mystery of the gospel - the inclusion of Gentiles and Jews on equal terms as members of Christ's body. Just as Christianity was born of Judaism, so the first apostle to the Gentiles had to have been a Jew, with a deep grasp of God's acts in previous dispensations.⁸⁸ The rejection of the Jewish apostles cleared the way for the introduction of the Gentile apostolate.⁸⁹

Catholic Apostolics emphasised that the first twelve and the last twelve had different missions, requiring different qualifications. The Jewish apostles had to have seen the risen Christ because they were commissioned as witnesses to the resurrection and all

⁸² [Woodhouse], *Ministry on Apostles*, III.

⁸³ "Great Testimony", §42.

⁸⁴ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 68; Carlyle, "Apostles Given, Lost, Restored", 312-3.

⁸⁵ E.g. [J.G.Francis], *Discourse on the Office of Apostle*, 11.

⁸⁶ [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.319-20.

⁸⁷ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 53.

⁸⁸ W.W.Andrews, *True Constitution*, 129.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 37-8; "Great Testimony", §53.

that it implied, in the face of Jewish unbelief. By contrast, the last apostles were charged with preparing the church for Christ's imminent return; while the first apostles witnessed to Christ's resurrection, the last apostles witnessed to a resurrection to come.⁹⁰ The first twelve began from an existing unity: the last twelve began from division and sought to restore the church to unity.⁹¹ The first mission ended with the Fall of Jerusalem; the last would only end with the ingathering of the Gentiles and their presentation to Christ.⁹² Yet the two missions were not unconnected: "The highest proof of a true restored Apostolate, will be seen *in their taking up and carrying forward the work begun by the first Apostles.*"⁹³

Another justification for belief in restored apostles was provided by the church's character. It derived its apostolic character from Christ as Apostle, just as it derived its priestly character from Christ as High Priest: it was apostolic because it was sent as Christ was sent.⁹⁴ Christ's being the Apostle did not imply that no other apostles could be given to the church; it simply meant that the apostolic work they did was reckoned *His* work and not their own.⁹⁵ Indeed, it was the apostolic character and heavenly nature of the church as a whole which made the restoration of apostles conceivable, because these were derived from Christ as its Head and Apostle; it was apostolic as the body of *the* Apostle, and thus it ever had power to put forth the ministry of apostles as a ministry which was in Christ.⁹⁶

Carlyle argued for the permanency of the apostolic office on the grounds that God's ways within a dispensation did not change and nothing in Scripture indicated that any of His ordinances were only temporary. In addition, the end for which apostles had been given (perfect maturity in Christ, according to Ephesians 4.15-16) had not yet been achieved; the church's condition still required apostolic ministry.⁹⁷ He listed the essential qualifications for apostleship as an immediate commission from God, public attestation of this call through prophecy, experience of church life from which to learn, recognition by a church walking in the Spirit, and evidence that Christ was acting as Apostle through the claimant.⁹⁸

Paul's call to apostleship was seen as programmatic for that of the restored apostles. He was commissioned as an apostle to the Gentiles without having companied with Christ during His earthly ministry. This was not, therefore, a qualification for

⁹⁰ [Francis], *Office of Apostle*, 11.

⁹¹ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 24, 59-60.

⁹² [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.321-2.

⁹³ W.W.Andrews, *True Constitution*, 103.

⁹⁴ W.W.Andrews, *The Catholic Apostolic Church*, 18n.

⁹⁵ [Tarbet], *Christ and the Church*, 14.

⁹⁶ Dalton, *What is the Church?* 24; *idem*, *Apostleship*, 13.

⁹⁷ Carlyle, "Apostles Given, Lost, Restored", 289-95.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 298-303.

apostleship *per se*, and 1 Corinthians 9.1 ("Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?") was not to be interpreted as giving the logical reasons why Paul was to be accepted as an apostle, but rather as a series of parallel questions.⁹⁹ In this way they answered the standard objection that it was essential for apostles to have been eye-witnesses of the risen Christ. In 1854 Thomas Groser wrote *The Call of St. Paul to the Apostleship*, to answer the question "How do we know God has restored the office of Apostle?" The early apostles and believers were able to recognise Paul because, unlike the contemporary church, they were walking in the Spirit and so able to discern His working; it ought to be easier to recognise additional apostles now because the call of Paul had set a precedent.¹⁰⁰ It would have been harder to recognise additional apostles to the twelve in the early church because the twelve (or most of them) were still alive; the lack of New Testament intimation of the restoration of apostles was no objection to recognising apostles now, since none was given to the early church regarding the appointment of additional apostles.¹⁰¹ To Paul had been given the task of building on the foundation laid by the Jewish apostles, organising the church as a corporate body - a work taken up by the restored apostles.¹⁰² Groser challenged outsiders: "Paul was received upon his own testimony and the grace that was perceived to be in him. Upon the same ground must apostles be received now. But if not, let them be believed for their works' sake."¹⁰³

The weakness of the division of the apostles into two groups of twelve was that it put Paul and Barnabas, whose appointment and mission were crucial to Catholic Apostolic thought¹⁰⁴, in a somewhat anomalous position. While Paul was seen as the first Gentile apostle, he was not part of the restored twelve; thus Catholic Apostolics tacitly acknowledged that there were indeed other apostles than the two groups of twelve with which the dispensation began and ended. Indeed, although the idea of a *twelfefold* apostleship was dear to Catholic Apostolics, it was not satisfactorily integrated into their teaching about the restoration of apostles. When "the Lord's work" began, there was no expectation that twelve apostles would be given as a counterpart to the first twelve; Baxter mentioned only himself and Armstrong as called during this phase of the work, and the earliest reference to a twelfefold apostleship which I have found is the prophecy given early in 1835, directing Cardale to seek six more apostles to make up their number to twelve.

⁹⁹ W.W.Andrews, *True Constitution*, 24.

¹⁰⁰ T.Groser, *The Call of St. Paul to the Apostleship*, 6-7.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 11-2.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁰⁴ E.Miller, *Irvingism*, 2.32.

This weakness was to be exploited by those who seceded to form the New Apostolic Church.¹⁰⁵ Woodhouse issued a paper on 19th February 1863 concerning the new movement¹⁰⁶, rejecting Geyer's action in calling new apostles, and claiming that the idea that the church was intended to be headed by twelve apostles throughout this dispensation lacked justification.¹⁰⁷ Paul and Barnabas had not been called as *replacement* apostles (nor were any others in the New Testament, with the exception of Matthias).¹⁰⁸ Though God was able to call new apostles it had not been proved that those who died should be replaced; in any case, such action would be for apostles to initiate.¹⁰⁹ Contrary to Geyer's assertion, there had been no prophecies that replacements were to be sought.¹¹⁰ Against the use of Acts 13 to justify the breakaway group's action, Woodhouse argued that it would be impossible for the existing apostles to work with men who had not been with them since 1835 (here he drew on the requirement in Acts 1 that the replacement for Judas Iscariot had to have been with the twelve throughout Christ's earthly ministry) and whom they had not chosen themselves.¹¹¹ The two sides were pitting one biblical precedent against another, and Catholic Apostolics used some of the arguments against New Apostolics which had been used against them.

5.2.2. The mission of the restored apostles - preparation for Christ's return

The apostles' mission was to Christendom rather than to the heathen. They were given:

... to be the heads under Christ, and supreme rulers of the Catholic Church; to be the fountains and the teachers of the doctrine of the Church; and lastly, to bestow the Holy Ghost by the laying on of their hands, whether for sealing all who believe, or for ordaining the Ministers of the House of God. ... These functions none other can fulfil, so far as is revealed in Scripture, save apostles, and those only who are immediately and personally delegated by them.¹¹²

Their aim was that of preparing the church for Christ's return by perfecting it in holiness through the restoration of its ordinances, in order to "present" it to Christ as His bride.¹¹³ Such perfecting required the fulness of ministry and gift which could only be received from restored apostles.

¹⁰⁵ These events disproved the claim that possession of apostles was a guarantee against schism (Shaw, 243). In fact, unity probably owed more to Cardale's judicious autocracy.

¹⁰⁶ "On the possible call of New Apostles ... with particular reference to Herr H.Geyer and his New Apostolic Church", in Newman-Norton, *The Hamburg Schism*, 1-16.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, x-xii, 5-6.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 11. It was claimed that Carlyle had told a congregation in his tribe as early as 1851 that they should pray for a replacement for Mackenzie to make up the full number of the apostles (*ibid.*, xiv).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, xiii.

¹¹² "Great Testimony", §37.

¹¹³ Dalton, *Apostleship*, 9.

Their mission to the baptised

Catholic Apostolics viewed themselves not as a church but as God's work within Christendom, recalling and restoring the church to unity and order by means of apostolic rule.¹¹⁴ Apostles and prophets were to reunite the faithful and rebuild the one catholic church in preparation for Christ's return.¹¹⁵ The movement's name was a testimony to their refusal to see themselves as schismatic, since they refused to identify themselves by any other name than that common to all Christians.¹¹⁶

Evaluating the Religious Census of 1851, Woodhouse wrote:

We have no exclusive right to the name of the Catholic Apostolic Church; we have no exclusive right to the ministries of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. They were not given to us for ourselves but for the Church, nor were they restored for our edification, but for the building up of the one Body of Christ. We have them because they belong to the Church, and because we belong to the Church; and there is no baptized man, woman, or child, who has not as much right and part in them as we have. God's spirit [sic] is not working among us only.¹¹⁷

The strongly negative attitude towards existing churches as apostate and rejected by God, seen in Baxter's prophecies¹¹⁸, gave way to a more respectful estimate of the relationship between "the Lord's work" and the rest of Christendom.¹¹⁹ No doubt, as various writers have suggested, the apostles' missions to "gather gold" in the years from 1837 to 1840 were a factor in this, but Woodhouse saw as relevant their year's retreat in 1835-6: learning from one another's backgrounds during this time helped remove sectarian or partial views from their thinking.¹²⁰

Like Paul's apostolic ministry in 2 Corinthians 2.15-16, their ministry to Christendom was double-edged; only with the advent of apostolic ministry could the professing church's state be fully manifest, and only then could it be charged with the sin of rejection of God's work, and the believing remnant completed.¹²¹ The Jewish rejection of the first twelve was now being paralleled by the Gentile church's rejection of the last twelve.¹²²

¹¹⁴ R.A.Davenport, 214-5.

¹¹⁵ Norton, *Restoration* (1854), 3.

¹¹⁶ [Cardale], *Letter*, v.

¹¹⁷ [Woodhouse], *The Census and the Catholic Apostolic Church*, 15.

¹¹⁸ Baxter, *Narrative*, 28-9.

¹¹⁹ Cf. R.A.Davenport, 214-5.

¹²⁰ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 54.

¹²¹ [R.Brewster], *The Church of England in her Liturgy or Prayer Book Catholic and Apostolic*, 17.

¹²² Woodhouse, *Ministry on Apostles*, 8.

Ruling the Church

In his discourse on missionaries, Irving had defined the work of apostles as preaching the gospel to the heathen, and speculated on the church's continuing need of them; he saw the apostolic office as reappearing in that of missionary.¹²³ Once the manifestations began, the work of apostles was seen as primarily concerned with individual sanctification rather than church order, although it was soon recognised that restored apostles would be necessary in order to constitute the spiritual church which was to replace the existing apostate body.¹²⁴ They would be the chief recipients of the Spirit, bestowing Him by the laying on of hands and baptising with fire as His agents in sealing believers before the coming judgments; John baptised with water, the first apostles with the Spirit, and the last apostles would baptise with fire, completing the Spirit's work in the church.¹²⁵ Baxter recounted an utterance in which it was declared "that the Lord would again send apostles, by the laying on of whose hands should follow the baptism of fire, which should subdue the flesh, and burn out sin; and should give to the disciples of Christ the full freedom of the Holy Ghost, and full and final victory over the world."¹²⁶

While critics continued to focus on this aspect of apostolic work, accusing Catholic Apostolics of believing that sinless perfection was attainable through the gifts given *via* the apostles, Catholic Apostolic thought regarding the apostles' mission came to focus on their position as the only ministers called immediately by Christ.¹²⁷ Galatians 1.1: "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) ..." was a favourite text.¹²⁸ As such, apostles were the link between the church on earth and her Head in heaven:

Through the Apostles alone the authority of the Lord in His Church finds its legitimate exercise, through them the Church is admitted into the fellowship of the Father and of the Son, through them the Holy Ghost is ministered, through them the gifts are given, through them all officers of authority are constituted, by the laying on of their hands; and to them all the other ministers are subordinate.¹²⁹

¹²³ Irving, *Missionaries*, xxi, xxiii.

¹²⁴ Baxter, *Narrative*, 79.

¹²⁵ Baxter, *Irvingism*, 21. For baptism with fire, see Irving, *PW*, 2.345.

¹²⁶ Baxter, *Narrative*, 65.

¹²⁷ Although Shaw suggested that the restored apostles received what amounted to Presbyterian ordination in 1835 (Shaw, 79), Catholic Apostolics differentiated their "separation" from ordination.

¹²⁸ "Great Testimony", §101; cf. Calvin's assertion that while ministers were "not *by* men" because called by God, only of apostles could it be said that they were "not *through* men" (*Institutes*, IV.3.13).

¹²⁹ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 68; cf. E. Miller, *Irvingism*, 2.20.

However, they were not in themselves the heads of the church; they ruled not as men but as God's ordinances, or men-in-office. Christ did not transfer His authority to them as substitutes for Himself, but used them as instruments, committing His Apostleship to them.¹³⁰ He was *the* Apostle (Hebrews 3.1), the one sent by his Father into the world, with His authority (drawing on the Hebrew term *shaliach*); by His work as Apostle believers were saved.¹³¹

The work of apostles was "to minister in the Church the word and the spirit of the Lord."¹³² "As the will directs and regulates the heart, the understanding, and the imagination, each according to its nature; so the apostle is the executive of the Lord's mind and will, and directs and regulates all the other ministries ..." ¹³³ They were responsible for the maintenance of doctrine, discipline, and ministry.¹³⁴ "Apostles, and apostles alone, are declared in Scripture to be the centre of authority, of doctrine, of unity in all things, to the visible Church of Christ on earth, until His second and glorious appearing ..." ¹³⁵ Woodhouse spoke of them as the twelve elders of the universal church under Christ its Angel, ruling the church in His absence.¹³⁶ The college of apostles as a unity was charged with ruling the church; only in that unity was the Lord's mind to be found, which contrasted with the claim of one man (the Pope) to be the Vicar of Christ - a position which belonged to no man on earth.¹³⁷

Apostles were the depositaries of God's will, and thus the supreme authority under Christ. Scripture alone was insufficient for regulatory purposes, as the variety in its interpretation demonstrated, and so apostles were given as an external authority over the whole church to confer the Spirit and thus ensure that God's will was written on individual hearts.¹³⁸ If they remained faithful, Christ would preserve them from doctrinal error.¹³⁹ Representing Christ as chief ministers of the universal church,

¹³⁰ W.W.Andrews, *True Constitution*, 64-5; [J.S.Davenport], *True Apostolical succession*, 5.

¹³¹ [Tarbet], *Christ and the Church*, 16; [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 68.

¹³² [Tarbet], *Christ and the Church*, 15.

¹³³ [Tarbet], *Shadows*, 32-3. This was balanced by an assertion of the local church's independence, the apostles' duty being not to manage local affairs but to see that the laws of catholic Christianity were observed (R.S.Ward, 51).

¹³⁴ Dalton, *What is the Church?*, 29; cf. Perceval's undated note from a pre-1840 Council meeting that apostles were for unity of doctrine, rule and oversight (Perceval Papers, 57/4, British Library Additional MS 49192).

¹³⁵ "Great Testimony", §37, cf. §42. Thus, in contrast with Darby, their remaining in Jerusalem in Acts 8.1 was seen not as evidence of failure but of faithfulness to their calling.

¹³⁶ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 22; cf. [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.24.

¹³⁷ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 42-3.

¹³⁸ [T.Groser], *The Four Ministries of the Church in their Adaptation to Man's Nature*, 9-10.

¹³⁹ [J.B.Cardale], *The Substance of two discourses delivered in the Apostles' Chapel at Albury on the subject of certain errors regarding God's purpose towards Mankind*, 3-4 (quoting John 16.13 in support).

apostles held it together, as well as holding together the different channels of grace (the variety of ministries, Scripture, and prophecy).¹⁴⁰

Immediately after Pentecost, all ecclesiastical offices were contained in the apostles; differentiation occurred as the church grew.¹⁴¹ Through the restored apostles all other ministers were to be ordained; initially they waited for the supernatural impulse of the Spirit before so doing, but in 1835 they were directed by prophecy to ordain in the strength of their commission¹⁴², though they were still to await prophetic confirmation that the candidate was truly called to office.¹⁴³ Strictly speaking, although prophets had to be restored first so that apostles might be called and necessary changes to church order made clear, the restoration of order began with the calling of apostles: "No restoration of the Church can ever begin in an orderly way, and start at once on the perfect method of God."¹⁴⁴ The early disorder was seen as allowed because of the exceptional situation, but order required apostles.

Bestowing the Spirit

To perfect the church as a bride ready for Christ's coming, apostles as His agents were to minister the Spirit of the man Christ Jesus to it. The gift of the Spirit to the church was not a "one-off" at Pentecost, but represented the continual flow of life from Christ to His body through apostles.¹⁴⁵ Without them the church could not receive the Spirit's fulness nor be fully gifted, because it was to apostles alone that the Spirit was directly given at Pentecost; completeness of organisation was thus requisite to spiritual blessing and perfection.¹⁴⁶ In Carlyle's words: "A church with Apostles *may* fail to fulfil her calling, but a church without Apostles *must*."¹⁴⁷ However, it had been suggested earlier that the lack of gifts was not because there were no apostles but because the church was not exercising faith in Christ risen and ascended - *the* Apostle; the Spirit was given in response to faith rather than the laying on of the apostles' hands.¹⁴⁸ It seems that over time the emphasis shifted from faith in God's promise to the means through which this was fulfilled.

¹⁴⁰ [Sitwell], *Purpose*, 199.

¹⁴¹ Thiersch, 70-1; cf. Craik's view outlined in section 5.1.1.

¹⁴² Copinger, "Annals", 51.

¹⁴³ [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.591; [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 36.

¹⁴⁴ J.S.Davenport, *Irving*, 41, cf. 39-40.

¹⁴⁵ [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.69; Dalton, *What is the Church?*, 33.

¹⁴⁶ [Cardale], *Character*, 13; Dalton, *What is the Church?*, 23-4. The idea that the Spirit was given initially to apostles alone pre-dated Catholic Apostolic thinking: Thomas Scott had explicitly denied it (A.C.Downer, *Thomas Scott the Commentator*, 109), perhaps in opposition to high-church writers with whom he was engaged in controversy.

¹⁴⁷ Carlyle, "Apostles Given, Lost, Restored", 289.

¹⁴⁸ [Woodhouse], *Ministry on Apostles*, 14; cf. Irving, "Narrative of Facts", *Fraser's Magazine*, January 1832, 760.

In a homily delivered in 1862, Dalton declared the unique function of apostles to be that of conveying the Spirit to enable each believer to function as part of the body, differentiating this from the regeneration conveyed through baptism:

Apostleship is the first link of the chain which unites (ministerially considered) Christ to His body, the church; and the function, the special function, of that office is to minister the Holy Ghost, not in the form of, or unto, regenerate life, for baptism (which is the ordinance for that) is not the speciality of apostles, but to administer the Holy Ghost for the perfecting, harmonization and energizing of the body.¹⁴⁹

This function was enshrined in the ordinance of sealing, viewed as part of Christian initiation: Catholic Apostolics appealed to texts such as Ephesians 1.13, 4.30, and Acts 1.4-5, and saw sealing as included in the foundational truths mentioned in Hebrews 6.1-2.¹⁵⁰ The idea of sealing originated with the Albury circle, who gave it an eschatological connotation drawn from the reference to it in Revelation 7.1-4. Irving differentiated the sealed 144,000 from the invisible church of the redeemed, applying the concept to Britain as a nation sealed from the judgments to fall on the other nine kingdoms of the former Roman Empire, on account of its opposition to popish idolatry and its maintenance of true worship: as such it was the firstfruits of the kingdoms of this world.¹⁵¹ The Albury circle saw sealing as protecting those who received it from the Great Tribulation, but did not view it in terms of a sacramental rite. In his prophecies, however, Baxter saw it as the result of the baptism with fire conveyed by the laying on of apostolic hands in order to protect believers from the judgments coming upon the earth; Cardale's call as apostle was also seen as including the commission to convey the Spirit by the laying on of hands. The "Great Testimony" continued the themes of sealing as eschatological protection and as conveyed through the ordinances set by God in the church.¹⁵² It was received by heeding their message and welcoming the restored gifts and ministries¹⁵³, the phenomena in Scotland in 1830 being regarded as the seal and answer to the prayers of God's people for His church to be restored.¹⁵⁴

Although sealing became institutionalised as a sacramental rite, clear continuities with the early understanding remained, and its being institutionalised should not blind us to the dramatic effect resulting from its introduction. Its reception came to be seen as the divine remedy for the church's ruined state, since by it believers were made holy and

¹⁴⁹ *Homilies Preached at Albury*, 396.

¹⁵⁰ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 125-6.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity*, 498-514.

¹⁵² "Great Testimony", §101.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, §102.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, §106.

fitted for service¹⁵⁵, and brought into a right relationship with God's apostles.¹⁵⁶ Locating the gift of the Spirit in a sacramental setting served to enhance rather than erode apostolic authority.¹⁵⁷ In contrast with the early years, supernatural manifestations were not expected to follow the laying on of apostles' hands; indeed, they were actively discouraged.¹⁵⁸ Woodhouse differentiated sealing from such manifestations:

This giving of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of Apostles' hands is not to be confounded with spiritual manifestations. It is more and higher than any spiritual manifestation. It is the means appointed of God whereby the baptized members of the Body of Christ are made partakers of the Holy Ghost ... The fact of an individual having already manifested any form of spiritual gift in no way interferes with or makes unnecessary or superfluous the act of sealing ...¹⁵⁹

The *General Rubrics*, which governed the movement's liturgical life, stated that sealing was "for imparting the fulness of God's grace, through the anointing of the Holy Ghost, and for receiving that specific seal of the Holy Ghost for bestowing which Apostles are the ordinance of God: therefore all baptized persons should be instructed to desire this grace, whether they have been confirmed by bishops or not."¹⁶⁰ Sealing differed from confirmation in that confirmation was a renewal of baptismal vows before admission to communion, whereas sealing fitted believers to play their part in the body of Christ. It was accordingly administered to all members on reaching the age of twenty, in line with prophetic light apparently given in 1835; this in the Old Testament was the age of attaining manhood, at which the Israelite became responsible to play his part in warfare as one now dedicated to God's service.¹⁶¹ The number of the sealed was a perfect number - 144,000; they were the "firstfruits" of a great harvest of souls, and would escape the Great Tribulation through which the rest of Christendom would have to pass before being united with Christ.¹⁶² Cardale explained its absence from the church for so long by saying that only when God found people willing to lay hold of baptismal grace did He give apostles to confirm them; without such a desire to grow, sealing would merely confirm them in unbelief.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁵ Cardale, "Teachings to Candidates", 34.

¹⁵⁶ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 78.

¹⁵⁷ Roberts, 189.

¹⁵⁸ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 131.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁶⁰ *General Rubrics*, III.XI.2.

¹⁶¹ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 126-9.

¹⁶² Norton, *Restoration* (1854), 9. When it became obvious that many areas were not responding to the apostles' message and the apostles themselves were dying before the number had been completed, it was explained that the apostles would continue this work in the world to come (E. Miller, *Irvingism*, 1.272). Miller saw this as contradicting the idea that those sealed would escape the Great Tribulation on earth (*ibid.*, 1.293).

¹⁶³ Cardale, "Teachings to Candidates", 13.

Leading the Church's Worship

Intercession was a prominent part of the church's worship under restored apostles. It was often stated that only a body recognising the universal ministry of apostles could engage in "catholic confession" of the sins of the whole of Christendom.¹⁶⁴ Thus the compilation of the *Liturgy* was often appealed to as a proof of the genuineness of the claim to a restored apostolate; its ethos was that of one body because it was received from those who presided over the whole body of Christ.¹⁶⁵

The complexity of the regulations governing the conduct of worship and church affairs may seem less surprising when we remember that four of the apostles had a legal background, but it represented a change in direction when compared with the early years. Drummond recorded that at Irving's ordination as angel in May 1833 one lesson gleaned from the reading of the letters to the seven churches (Revelation 2-3) was the need for the angel of each church to keep these words "that we might henceforth cease altogether from the canons and laws of man."¹⁶⁶ The production of the *Liturgy* (which began within a few years) and *General Rubrics* (which first appeared in 1852) were evidence of a clear increase in apostolic preoccupation with internal affairs, a point which critics were not slow to notice. Miller has suggested that the production of a written liturgy and constitution was a response to the "crisis" of 1840, which had demonstrated the lack of public formularies to hold the church together¹⁶⁷; although the first outline order for communion appeared before this in 1838, it is undoubtedly true that the crisis accelerated the shift to a liturgical worship. All the same, this shift could not have occurred without the underlying belief in the importance of due order, and the belief that spiritual realities required expression through appropriate outward forms, a belief derived from Coleridge *via* Irving.

5.2.3. Bishops and apostles

Initially apostles were expected to be the heads of a new order of ministers endowed with supernatural gifts, who would replace existing apostate orders.¹⁶⁸ At Irving's ordination as angel, Cardale commanded that 1 Samuel 2-3 (the judgment of God on the house of Eli) be read and applied to the contemporary churches.¹⁶⁹ Carlyle viewed Eli as typifying the existing churches no longer able to rule effectively, and Samuel as the restored apostleship taking over rule.¹⁷⁰ However, this idea was soon dropped; the

¹⁶⁴ [Sitwell], *Purpose*, 366.

¹⁶⁵ Carlyle, "Apostles Given, Lost, Restored", 287.

¹⁶⁶ H.Drummond, *Narrative*, 42.

¹⁶⁷ E.Miller, *Irvingism*, 1.222-3.

¹⁶⁸ Baxter, *Irvingism*, 20.

¹⁶⁹ H.Drummond, *Narrative*, 39-40; [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 25-6.

¹⁷⁰ Carlyle, "Apostles Given, Lost, Restored", 316.

"Great Testimony" spoke of Christians "giving honour to all orders and degrees in Christ's Church, whether those continued by succession from the first Apostles, or those now bestowed upon a spiritual people by that ordinance again reviving ..."171 Indeed, it even came to be claimed that those in the truest succession of the Church of England were those who accepted the restored apostles, the collects for Advent being quoted as foreshadowing such a restoration.172 The mission of the apostles was thus not to supersede existing ministries but to complete them.173

While apostles were to head up the universal church, bishops were to head up local churches.

An Apostle is given of God, to rule over the universal Church, to confer the Holy Ghost by imposition of hands, and to minister the Spirit in all his fulness to bishops and all others. A bishop is a *bishop* and not an apostle: with his own ministry to fulfil however, and with a limited grace to confer, in the confines of a limited jurisdiction.174

For catholicity a universal ministry was necessary; bishops without apostles was no better a system than congregationalism or independency.175 The office of apostle was the only one which could not be appropriated for party purposes176, and the church's division under bishops proved the need for apostles.177 When the apostles died, men naturally sought replacements and so submitted to papal or civil rule.178 These were seen as a perversion of the universal rule which was the chief function of apostles179, though they also showed that where, as in the case of the papacy, a higher authority bound bishops together, their authority was more of a reality.180 Such arguments did not, however, take account of the existence of sharp disagreements between apostles, as outlined by Paul in Galatians 2 and experienced by the restored apostles.

Bishops or angels were not to be seen as successors of apostles; Dalton explained how the office of bishop developed under apostles, quoting Hooker as speaking of "bishops with restraint" (of jurisdiction) in contrast to apostles, "bishops without restraint".181 The New Testament gave no hint that angels were to succeed apostles as rulers over the universal church, nor was it intimated that the work under apostles

171 "Great Testimony", §113.

172 [Brewster], *Church of England*, 24-30, 40.

173 [R.Norton], *Reasons for Believing that the Lord has Restored to the Church Apostles and Prophets*, v.

174 "Great Testimony" §62.

175 [J.S.Davenport], *True Apostolical succession*, 12, 14.

176 [J.G.Francis], *Discourse on Priesthood*, 14.

177 [Sitwell], *Purpose*, 360.

178 Dalton, *What is the Church?* 29-30.

179 Dalton, "Office of Bishop", 5.

180 [J.S.Davenport], *True Apostolical succession*, 14.

181 Dalton, "Office of Bishop", 1-3.

was preparatory to the establishment of a better church order under bishops.¹⁸² Indeed, it was strange that opponents could believe that Christ laboured through apostles, only to bring about the sad state of the contemporary church.¹⁸³ For Cardale, even if it could be shown that the apostles intended bishops to succeed them, that was not the point: what mattered was what God intended, since even apostles were not necessarily infallible.¹⁸⁴ Since they ruled in Christ's name and not their own, it was not for them to appoint their own successors.¹⁸⁵

While accepting that those ordained in apostolic succession possessed a valid ministry, Catholic Apostolics did not approve of the weight given to the idea by the Tractarians; the accepted understanding of apostolic succession had more in common with the Old Testament priestly line than with Christ's Melchizedek priesthood operating according to the power of an endless life.¹⁸⁶ When the first apostles disappeared, the fountain of spiritual life stopped flowing, and the attempt to trace a succession of ministry back to Peter was about as much use as showing that a number of pools in a dry river-bed once formed part of the same stream!¹⁸⁷ True apostolic succession was a succession of living apostles sent by Christ.¹⁸⁸ The passing of 1800 years was no obstacle to apostles being given; Christ had already sent Paul; therefore He could not be restricted to using ministry derived by succession from the original twelve, but might directly appoint new ministry as He willed.¹⁸⁹ Groser, as a former Baptist minister, rejected the attempt to restrict the church's ministry to those in communion with the successor(s) of Peter; he was the chief apostle while Christ was on earth, but the idea that his successor possessed supremacy over the church was a symptom of its earthly-mindedness, and it denied Christ's freedom to appoint whom He willed. It was Paul's letters which possessed the highest tone of authority, not Peter's (or those of any other apostle).¹⁹⁰

Andrews (a former Congregationalist) had an unusual view of apostolic succession, which fitted well with the emphasis on the continual nature of the gift of the Spirit. He asserted that succession did not go *back* to the original apostles, but continually *up* to Christ who endowed the apostles and used them as channels of His grace.¹⁹¹ The historic succession was thus regarded as irregular though not on that account invalid:

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁸³ Dalton, *Apostleship*, 8.

¹⁸⁴ [Cardale], *Letter*, 23.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁸⁶ [J.S.Davenport], *True Apostolical succession*, 15.

¹⁸⁷ [J.G.Francis], *Discourse on the Pentecostal Gifts*, 10.

¹⁸⁸ [J.S.Davenport], *True Apostolical succession*, 17.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 11; [idem], *Secessions to Rome*, 8.

¹⁹⁰ Groser, *St. Paul*, 8-9.

¹⁹¹ W.W.Andrews, *True Constitution*, 65.

yet the restoration of apostles was not to be seen as setting aside existing ministries but as strengthening that which remained in them.¹⁹² However, critics, remembering the early negative assessment of Christendom as "Babylon", were not at all convinced by such reasoning.

5.2.4. Apostles and their critics

While Catholic Apostolics came to emphasise apostleship increasingly, not all their opponents fastened onto this; Newton's arguments against the phenomena seen in the movement did not change substantially over thirty years, and Darby's did not give as much weight to apostleship as they did to Irvingite claims that God was restoring His church. However, high-churchmen such as Pusey had plenty to say on the emergence of a hierarchy which was not in continuity with the historic church. Certain major themes recurred in critiques of Catholic Apostolic teaching on apostles, which we shall examine. However, most Catholic Apostolic writers had little time for critics, seeing little point in trying to convince those whom they regarded as refusing to hear and obey God's word.¹⁹³

Signs of the apostles

There was a substantial shift in Catholic Apostolic thinking on the issue of the signs expected to attend an apostle's ministry. This seems to have been their weakest point, and there were several major defections over this issue. In all three cases of apostolic defection (Baxter, David Dow, and Mackenzie), an important factor was the way in which supernatural endowments came to be regarded as non-essentials. All three would have been prepared to recognise apostles with such endowments but could not accept that they (or others) could be genuine apostles without them. Baxter viewed this change as proof of the whole thing having been a delusion:

... they are now avowedly exercising apostolic functions, without pretending to have the signs of an apostle, "In signs and wonders, and mighty deeds:" and the individual, who has been thus set apart for the apostolic office, prays, in their meetings, in the following strain:- "Lord, am I not thine apostle? - yet where are the signs of my apostleship? - where are the wonders and mighty deeds? - O Lord, send them down upon us," &c. He has, as an apostle, and in the name of an apostle, laid hands on several, and ordained them to the ministerial office, as evangelists and elders; yet it is not pretended that the manifestation of the baptism of the Holy Ghost follows, with the laying on of his hands! - When I was amongst them, we were all of one mind, that the apostolic office could not be exercised, until the signs of an apostle, in "signs, wonders, and mighty deeds," were manifest in the individual claiming the apostolic office; and were also of one mind, that the baptism of the Holy Ghost would attend the laying on of the hands of the apostle.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Ibid., 114.

¹⁹³ Carlyle, "Apostles Given, Lost, Restored", 321.

¹⁹⁴ Baxter, *Narrative*, 84-5.

Pusey (who relied heavily on Baxter's version of events) wrote:

The first Irvingites did appeal to gifts of GOD; the later Irvingites mostly apologize for not having what the first claimed. The first bear witness to the necessity of such proof, the latter to the absence of it. The first Irvingites were right in their principle, but mistaken in the fact. The latter Irvingites, finding that the facts fail them, deny the principle.¹⁹⁵

Curiously, although the lack of success attending apostolic work might have been expected to precipitate it, no group emerged during the turbulent days of the 1830s and 1840s to keep alive the prayer for apostles so endowed. The only group which might have developed in this way was that centred on the Macdonalds, which lacked the clear-sighted leadership of the London group and so dispersed as they died.

Newton understood the matter of signs somewhat differently from other critics. Like them, he criticised the movement for not manifesting the signs which would be expected if apostles were active; however, if miracles were not to be expected, then onlookers had a right to expect the signs of sound doctrine and separation from the world: "Infallible truth in doctrinal statement is the least we could expect from a Church under direct Apostolic government ..."¹⁹⁶ In this connection he excoriated as heretical Irving's teaching regarding Christ's human nature, His work, and the believer's sanctification.

The apostles' response to all this was vigorous, though not always to the point, and they became very defensive about their opponents' unceasing insistence upon the necessity of signs and wonders as evidence of apostleship. Miracles had initially been appealed to as proof of "the Lord's work", and Irving himself had taught that they should be expected as confirmation of the message preached¹⁹⁷; but Catholic Apostolics developed explanations of their absence from the apostles' ministry while affirming their presence in the church as evidence of the reality of the work among them and even quoting brief case-histories.¹⁹⁸ Whereas the first twelve were sent to unbelievers and thus performed miracles openly, the last twelve were sent to professing believers, and thus the miracles associated with them occurred within the church.¹⁹⁹ Another line of argument was that the first apostles were weak and rejected by the churches they served²⁰⁰: while the restored apostles had been *separated* in 1835, they too were weak because their *sending out* was still in the future, to come after the resurrection

¹⁹⁵ [E.B.Pusey], "Apostolic Gift of Tongues, and Irvingite Counterfeit", *OCP* no.9, September 1854, 130.

¹⁹⁶ [Newton], "Doctrines of the Church in Newman-Street", 118-9.

¹⁹⁷ Irving, *CW*, 5.476.

¹⁹⁸ E.g. the ten cases recounted in Norton, *Restoration* (1861), 90.

¹⁹⁹ [Sitwell], *Purpose*, 347.

²⁰⁰ [Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 83.

of believers.²⁰¹ Only when their work was completed would apostles have their full credentials.²⁰²

Many wondered why, if these twelve men were the counterparts of the original twelve, their work did not meet with commensurate success. In terms reminiscent of Darby's dispensationalism, Sitwell explained that Christ's means were never given to recover a failed dispensation, and that the dispensation itself could not be restored once it failed.²⁰³ While this represented a change from the idea that Christ had sent apostles for precisely this purpose (to restore the church) it does seem like a return to the early belief of Baxter and others that Christendom was apostate and beyond hope of restoration, and that God was calling His elect out from it; the wheel had turned full circle in less than thirty years.

The real evidence of apostleship was believed to be spiritual and no more an external thing than was regeneration, sealing, or Christ's real presence in the ^eucharist.²⁰⁴ The church was not now in its infancy: it walked by faith rather than by sight, and thus the evidence would only be such as commended itself to faith and stumbled the unbelieving.²⁰⁵ The signs of apostleship included the manner of the sending out of the apostles on their mission, and the character of the churches they planted.²⁰⁶ Widespread prophetic confirmation of apostolic authority was also appealed to.²⁰⁷ The charge that miracles were a *sine qua non* of true apostles could be turned back on the heads of their opponents: if this were so, bishops must give up their claim to authority as successors of the apostles, since they performed no miracles.²⁰⁸ More radically, if there were no apostles without miracles, there could be no church without them either (implied by Mark 16.17: "these signs shall follow *them that believe*").²⁰⁹ The question to ask was not whether *all* apostolic works were being done, but whether *genuine* apostolic works were being done, such as rebuilding the church.²¹⁰ It was order, spiritual fulness, and resultant blessing, rather than signs and wonders, which demonstrated the apostles' divine commission.²¹¹ Indeed, miracles never accompanied ministry at the end of a dispensation.²¹²

²⁰¹ Ibid., 63.

²⁰² Carlyle, "Apostles Given, Lost, Restored", 324.

²⁰³ [Sitwell], *Purpose*, 366-7.

²⁰⁴ [Cardale], *Character*, 25-6.

²⁰⁵ [Norton], *Reasons for Believing*, 19.

²⁰⁶ H.Drummond, *Discourses on the True Definition of the Church*, 117-8.

²⁰⁷ Norton, *Restoration*, (1854), 12.

²⁰⁸ [J.S.Davenport], *The Permanency of the Apostolic Office as Distinct from that of bishops, with reasons for believing that it is now revived in the Church*, 35.

²⁰⁹ Norton, *Restoration* (1861), 94.

²¹⁰ W.W.Andrews, *True Constitution*, 106.

²¹¹ Carlyle, *Mosaic Tabernacle*, 51.

²¹² [Drummond], *Brief Account*, 23.

The apostles' defence is reminiscent of Coleridge's view of faith, which he saw as beginning with believing where we cannot prove: the evidence may be insufficient for rational demonstration, but would grow sufficient as the individual lived out that faith-commitment in practice.²¹³ For Coleridge, miracles were not "evidences" in the generally-accepted sense, but served to confirm belief in Christ already adopted on other grounds.²¹⁴ Christianity's authority was seen not in its susceptibility to logical demonstration, but in its power to meet needs.²¹⁵ Similarly, Catholic Apostolics could appeal to the necessity for exercising spiritual discernment, which when exercised would secure belief in the restored apostles.²¹⁶ Thus the "Great Testimony" aimed to make its readers feel the problems and so be prepared to accept the solution put forward therein.

Schism

Pusey criticised submission to the apostles by Anglican clergy as a breach of the vow made on ordination to uphold the threefold ministry.²¹⁷ Cardale's response was that those under apostles were not setting themselves up as rivals to the existing churches, nor were they sheep-stealing; they upheld the catholic faith and orders of ministry. Those ordained by apostles were ordained into the same church as those ordained by bishops. He put the charge down to annoyance that a number of Tractarians were being attracted by the Catholic Apostolic Church.²¹⁸ However, he elsewhere defined the three orders of ministry (typified by the divisions of the Tabernacle) as those of *apostle*, priest and deacon, which implies that Pusey's criticism was justified.²¹⁹

In proclaiming the restoration of apostleship among them, later Catholic Apostolics were at pains to deny the implication that other churches were non-apostolic. Cardale argued against the charge of schism in *The Character of our Present Testimony and Work*. His principal thesis was that the apostles worked within the one church to which all Christians belonged. Their office was not new and therefore neither was the body gathered under them; this body was intended as a refuge for all believers, though he encouraged those who accepted the apostles' message to remain where they were. The apostles' business was calling the elect out of the world to a realisation of their heavenly hope, and thus they did not interfere with the church's earthly standing. If these were true apostles, it was by definition impossible that they could be accused of schism from the true church; neither could obedience to them ever conflict with

²¹³ Willey, *Coleridge*, 35.

²¹⁴ Reardon, 146.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

²¹⁶ This parallels Darby's belief in the moral power of divine truth.

²¹⁷ [Pusey], "Irvingism", *OCP* no.16, April 1855, 265.

²¹⁸ [Cardale], *Letter*, xiv-xv, 1-2; cf. Norton, *Restoration* (1854), 10-1.

²¹⁹ [Cardale], *Readings*, 1.255-6.

obedience to the church. Apostles were called to rebuild the one altar of the church and bestow existing offices, not to set up a new and independent organism. While separate congregations were often formed, this was because of the rejection of the apostolic work by existing clergy and for the purpose of intercession on behalf of the whole church on earth.²²⁰ Of such congregations, he wrote:

... it is to be deplored that the present condition and circumstances of the Visible Church render these acts necessary. Being formed, the Churches under the immediate guidance and government of the Apostles will probably hereafter furnish a basis or centre on which the divided Churches of Christendom, when they shall receive the Message which they now refuse, may be edified in unity and love: but neither is this the immediate object. The two main objects to which, under present circumstances, the formation of these Churches is directed, are those we have already named, - the spiritual charge of such as cannot otherwise be cared for, and the offering of continual Intercession for the Church and for the World.²²¹

These arguments were not convincing, and begged the question as to why the restored apostles were to be accepted. Their acceptance was a matter of faith; to query their position and calling would put an individual into the class of those who obeyed an authority other than the apostles, and thus into the world (since obedience to the true church could never conflict with obedience to apostles). Cardale's apparent breadth of vision was belied by the fact that while all churches were considered apostolic, some were more apostolic than others: Catholic Apostolics believed that the fulness of apostolic blessing could only be received through living apostles, a view which later developed into a rigid exclusivism in the New Apostolic Church.

The absence of apostles

Why, it was asked, had there been no apostles for 1800 years? After all, as Pusey pointed out, their reappearance was not foreshadowed in Scripture.²²² He also considered Catholic Apostolic explanations as contradictory: "when they wish to account for the cessation of Apostles, they give as a reason the sins of the Church - when they wish to account for the restoration of Apostles, they give as a reason the sins of the Church; that is to say, they give the same reason for two contradictory results."²²³

It is true that at some points Catholic Apostolics blamed the loss of apostles on human sin, but at others they attributed it to the will of God, in contradistinction to human sin.²²⁴ The explanation that God's purpose could be hindered but not prevented²²⁵ did not totally extricate them from this dilemma, but they were on stronger ground when

²²⁰ [Cardale], *Character*, 34-9.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

²²² [Pusey], "Irvingism", *OCP* no.8, August 1854, 115.

²²³ [Pusey], "Irvingism", *OCP* no.16, April 1855, 268.

²²⁴ Norton, *Restoration* (1854), 5.

²²⁵ [Brewster], *Church of England*, 19.

they declared that if there was little in Scripture about restored apostles, there was even less about the divisions of Protestantism and Catholicism.²²⁶ Dalton explained their absence by offering three alternatives: either apostles were no longer needed, or God had changed, or man had failed; only the latter was acceptable, and it was corroborated by biblical history and prophecy.²²⁷ Their absence was allowed that the church might realise its true condition:

While it was the will of God, or rather the permitted postponement of His purpose, that the Church, instead of uninterruptedly taking possession of her full inheritance, should languish, learn her own wretchedness, and be tried with a long wilderness condition, making scarcely any unless a retrograde progress, there was no place for the continuance of Apostles; for the proper work of Apostleship is twofold: first that of laying the foundation of the spiritual temple; secondly that of bringing forth the top-stone; preparing the bride for the Bridegroom, and presenting her as a chaste virgin unto Christ.²²⁸

Indeed, this was an act of mercy on God's part, since apostles in a disobedient church would either be condemning it or rejected by it.²²⁹ A distinction was made between the permanency of the apostolic office and the belief that it should always be filled; even when it was vacant, Christ was still present in the church through the ministries derived from apostles.²³⁰ Although a break with the historic succession was inevitable if God was to restore what had been lost²³¹, this, as we have seen, was no obstacle to the reappearance of apostles.

It was also asked why the restoration of apostles had taken place in England: as Pusey commented, "it is, on the very surface, a large claim, that the Twelve Apostles should be revived in the 19th century in the person of twelve English gentlemen."²³² However, Catholic Apostolics gave a significant place to England in their interpretation of biblical prophecy, which had its roots in Irving, the Albury conferences and the *Morning Watch*. Groser summed up this tradition of understanding by saying that in England was found the strongest faith in the permanence of the apostolic office, as evidenced by the protest at the Reformation against its usurpation by the papacy.²³³

Invalid call to office

A charge often made was that the prophets by whom the apostles were called had been proved to be false prophets, invalidating the apostles' claim to have been divinely called. Taplin's involvement in the calling of most of the apostles was seen as

²²⁶ [Norton], *Reasons for Believing*, 8; idem, *Restoration* (1854), 8.

²²⁷ Dalton, *Apostleship*, 10-11.

²²⁸ Norton, *Restoration* (1854), 4.

²²⁹ Carlyle, "Apostles Given, Lost, Restored", 305.

²³⁰ [J.S.Davenport], *True Apostolical succession*, 6-7.

²³¹ Carlyle, "Apostles Given, Lost, Restored", 307.

²³² [Pusey], "Irvingism", *OCP* no.8, August 1854, 115.

²³³ Groser, *St. Paul*, 13-14.

implicating them, on the grounds that he was declared a false prophet and left Newman Street for a while in 1834. For Pusey and others, this was a case of 'once a false prophet, always a false prophet'.²³⁴ Circularity was another charge levelled at the restored apostles, it being alleged that they were called and set apart by the same angels and prophets whom they ordained.²³⁵

Catholic Apostolics were well aware of their vulnerability to such charges in the light of Taplin's crucial role: one admitted, "If there is anything wrong with Taplin, everything is wrong."²³⁶ Cardale tried to extricate them from these charges by explaining that prophets did not appoint or ordain apostles; moreover, he denied that any prophet was involved in calling the particular apostle who ordained him.²³⁷ He denied that any were called by Baxter, and rejected Baxter's own call to apostleship because it came in secret without being attested by others and thus amounted to self-calling.²³⁸ He also alleged that the restoration of apostles was not taught until after Baxter fell²³⁹, although this is contradicted by the fact that as early as 1830 such a restoration was clearly expected by those at Port-Glasgow.

Cardale was acutely aware that emphasis on immediate divine calling of apostles led to the accusation that he and his colleagues had simply set themselves up without external authentication of their call. Writing to Dowglass, he denied that apostles needed to be called through prophecy: while apostles needed prophetic light in appointing all other ministers, God, who appointed apostles directly, needed none. Prophecy attending the designation of the apostles was not to be equated with prophecy calling other ministers.²⁴⁰ Yet it is hard to see how this fine line was drawn between designation and calling, and critics probably failed to appreciate the difference.

5.3. Assessment

Many evangelicals and others in the 1820s and 1830s sought to return to an ideal form of Christianity: what was the place of apostles in that? Catholic Apostolics were clear that apostles were essential; Darbyites believed that apostles had played a fundamental role in New Testament Christianity in its ideal form, but that there was no point in seeking to return to that in a day of ruin because God did not purpose such a restoration; Open Brethren admitted that things would be better if apostles were still

²³⁴ [Pusey], "Irvingism", *OCP* no.16, April 1855, 266.

²³⁵ Flegg, "Catholic Apostolic Church", 58-9; E.Miller, *Irvingism*, 2.144.

²³⁶ R.S.Ward, 20.

²³⁷ [Cardale], *Letter*, 17.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 67-9.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁴⁰ Cardale to Dowglass, 14th November 1852, Newman-Norton Collection. Calvin used the same terminology: the Spirit preserved church order in Acts 13 by having Paul and Barnabas designated by the church (*Institutes*, IV.3.14).

present in the church, but that a return to New Testament principles was still possible without them, at least at a local level.

Significantly, apostles were not originally a central feature of Brethren or Catholic Apostolic thinking. They were not an integral part of the teaching which gave rise to the initial manifestations, although they were an early subject of petitionary prayer. For his part, Darby made little of them before the mid-1830s. It may be that external factors, notably the emergence of Tractarianism with its insistence on the importance of apostolic succession as essential for securing the church's continuing apostolicity, led to a change.

Although it was probably the Open Brethren who, in their denial that apostles were to be expected in their day, were closest to standard Reformed thinking, it is intriguing that aspects of the thought of both Darby and Catholic Apostolic writers on apostles can be traced back to Calvin. We may compare their ideas regarding apostles with Calvin's idea of the pastor (whose ministry paralleled that of the apostle or the evangelist) as representing Christ, building and extending the kingdom, caring for souls and ruling the church²⁴¹, or with his idea of the evangelist preaching the gospel and planting new churches. Each movement saw itself as divinely raised up because the ruined state of the church's historic succession necessitated such a break: this parallels Calvin's belief that God could revive the apostolic office as needed by the church. The Reformers, like these movements, were able to justify their break with the historic succession because they located continuity (or apostolicity) primarily in theology rather than in history or institutional structures.²⁴²

The major weakness in Darby's approach was that his understanding of the essence of apostleship as direct sending of individuals, coupled with his belief that in some sense apostles could still be given and his belief that the church was ruined and had therefore lost all organised forms of government, opened the door to a rampant individualism and autocracy which contrasted with the New Testament picture of apostles as the master-builders of the church. However, his distinction between two types of apostles is a plausible interpretation of the New Testament evidence and could provide an exegetical basis for recognising the exceptional ministries needed in a church which is not in its normative state of health and which faces major challenges.

On the Catholic Apostolic side, in addition to the contemporary criticisms already noted, others could be made. Their use of prophecy was highly selective, and it was extensively reinterpreted to fit in with later events. For instance, early prophecies pointed to the future bestowal of supernatural endowments on the church, but these

²⁴¹ George, 242.

²⁴² McGrath, 133.

prophecies were later ignored and the lack of endowments explained away as the role of the apostles shifted from that of supernaturally-empowered witnessing to Christ to that of heading up an institution. Another example is the summary dismissal of Baxter's call to apostleship in Catholic Apostolic defences against his writings and those which depended on him as a primary source; it is almost as if this was a skeleton in their cupboard which they wanted to forget. Similarly, Catholic Apostolic writers constantly sought to minimise the extent of their debt to Irving, because of the excesses and errors which they associated with his ministry.²⁴³ This chapter has demonstrated that there was a change in Catholic Apostolic understanding of the nature and task of apostles, yet paradoxically it also appears that their developed concept of apostleship owed more than has been acknowledged to Irving and Baxter.

Brethren and Catholic Apostolics agreed that the primary reason why no provision for apostolic succession was made in the New Testament was that Christ's return was seen as imminent. However, while Brethren rejected the notion of derivative authority as Jewish, Catholic Apostolics had no trouble with it, and indeed built their whole system of office upon it. Nonetheless, both agreed in emphasising the divine withdrawal of apostles, and the views of Darby and Catholic Apostolics regarding the results were surprisingly similar. Both saw authority in the church as dependent on the ministry of apostles, the essence of whose unique ministry was that they were directly sent (such sending being for Darby paradigmatic of this dispensation). It is not surprising, therefore, that Darby and the Catholic Apostolics insisted (in line with Calvin) that apostles were to be seen primarily as logically prior to the body rather than part of it. One further striking similarity is in the views concerning the Jewish and Gentile apostolates held by Darby and the Catholic Apostolics, and the belief that it was to Paul that the mystery of the gospel and the church was fully revealed (thus downgrading the importance of apostolic succession as derived from Peter). Once again, a dispensationalist hermeneutic would appear to under^{le}lay these views.

We have seen that anti-Irvingite literature tended initially to concentrate on miracles, tongues and prophecy, linking them often with Irving's christology. Darby made little reference to apostles either in his critiques of Irvingism or in expounding New Testament teaching concerning apostles (so presumably he did not develop this in conscious opposition to Irvingite teaching). It is also intriguing that Brethren writers, with their commitment to careful study of the New Testament, did not engage in sustained examination of the hermeneutical basis for the Irvingite concept of apostleship. Part of the reason may be that they saw a shift in Irvingite self-understanding: Wigram commented that whereas the movement had seen itself as a revival of the early church, it had come to view itself as *sui generis*.²⁴⁴ Thus, if it no

²⁴³ E.g. [Cardale], *Letter*, 7-16.

²⁴⁴ [Wigram], "Verity of Revival", 183.

longer claimed to be a restoration of "the New Testament church", Brethren exegesis of the New Testament no longer needed to include rebuttal of Irvingite views: opposition to Irvingism could proceed on theological rather than exegetical grounds. In view of this and the similarities noted between the two movements, one can only conclude that Brethren felt that their major disagreements with Irvingism were not ecclesiological: this is confirmed by the fact that, like Darby, other Brethren writers opposing Irvingism focused far more on the issues of Christology, soteriology and authority.

6. EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

6.1. Ecclesiological sources

Scripture was, of course, a major source for Brethren ecclesiology. Darby's thought (which was so influential among the Brethren) was moulded to a remarkable extent by his experience, not least during the period before his "deliverance" and the search for fellowship which followed it, and Thomas Scott's influence on him at that time resulted in his turning to Scripture as his sole, not merely his ultimate, authority. It was his entering into what he saw as the ideal form of Christian experience as held out in the New Testament which precipitated Darby's recognition of the extent to which church life fell short of the ideal: his formulation of a doctrine of the church's ruin was, paradoxically, stimulated by his "deliverance" from a personal sense of ruin. Although he possessed an extensive collection of theological works, he appears to have used it more for examples of what he was opposing than as a source of doctrinal illumination, and his claim to be largely independent in his thinking has a measure of truth in it. However, dispensationalism was not new to Darby: shared by Catholic Apostolics, it was part of the common currency of prophetic writers, whose works he studied with interest, as well as appearing in the Anglican tradition as he experienced it. Thus we must balance an assertion of the impossibility of establishing all his sources with a recognition that his ecclesiological thought shows many parallels with other contemporary movements.

The fact that Darby was not alone in espousing some form of dispensational perspective may help to explain why Open Brethren and others have often felt free to follow Darby's eschatology while rejecting an ecclesiology which owed much to Darby's particular high-church background. His background and his relative isolation during the 1820s may also account for the fact that although he shared with Open Brethren a desire to be guided solely by Scripture¹, he and they followed very different paths. Few of their leaders shared his background, with the exception of A.N.Groves, who consciously rejected it.

Darby's other theological sources cannot be established with certainty: they may well include Walker and the Haldanes, but it is surprising that there should be no trace of debts to high-church thinkers such as Alexander Knox (1757-1831), in spite of Darby's early high-churchmanship. Early contact with Philpot probably influenced Philpot more than Darby. A plausible case has been made out for his indebtedness to

¹ It is true that Darby disapproved of attempts to replicate a supposed New Testament pattern of church life, but he claimed to draw principles appropriate for fellowship in a day of ruin from the New Testament; thus he would have rejected the charge that he was going beyond Scripture in denying that contemporary church life could follow the New Testament pattern.

some of his tutors at Trinity College Dublin, notably Richard Graves, in the area of his dispensationalism², but Darby himself gave no hint of conscious dependence on them. A case may also be made for his drawing on post-Reformation Roman Catholic theology, especially in his espousal of futurism.³ That or orthodox Anglican thought could have provided the raw material for his insistence on the church's independence from the state and the necessity of its visibility.

Because of his early view that Calvin and Luther were outside the church, Calvin's thought would probably not have influenced him until after his "deliverance". However, his later references to them were positive.⁴ Darby's concept of ruin seems to owe its genesis to his own experience as interpreted in the light of Calvinist or Augustinian anthropology, and the parallels between his thought and Calvin's also imply a considerable measure of continuity with the Reformed tradition. It is clear that he early upheld Reformed doctrine regarding justification and assurance⁵, as Open Brethren writers would have done. Yet we must not overstate the extent of Darby's debt to Calvin and the Reformed tradition: while commending the reformer for his recognition of the authority of Scripture, Darby condemned any attempt to set Calvin's teaching up as a standard of truth, since Scripture alone could function in that way.⁶

Catholic Apostolic sources are somewhat easier to establish. Their debt to Tractarianism is unlikely to have been that great even though in many respects the movements developed in parallel; more probably, they shared common sources. Cardale had early begun to study the Fathers⁷, and owned a number of the *Tracts for the Times*.⁸ However, the direct debt to the Fathers is probably not as great as that to writers such as Hooker. Cardale stated that "The 5th Book of Hooker has my unqualified admiration & adhesion - I know it off pretty well by heart."⁹ Drummond, too, considered Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* especially valuable reading for ministers.¹⁰ Irving's debt to Hooker was well-known: sections from Book V of the *Ecclesiastical Polity* appeared on the title pages of his *Homilies on the Sacraments*.¹¹ Significantly, Hooker's theology

² Elmore, 44-76.

³ Tregelles' letters to Newton (see section 4.1.1) would support this.

⁴ E.g. Darby, *CW*, 1.224; 3.210-2, 236n.

⁵ See "The Doctrine of the Church of England at the time of the Reformation, of the Reformation itself, and of the Church of Rome, briefly compared with the Remarks of the Regius Professor of Divinity" (1831), *ibid.*, 3.1-43.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.205.

⁷ Trimen, 16.

⁸ Lively, 105. Catholic Apostolics, however, saw prophetic utterances during 1833 as anticipating these ([C.W.Boase], 795).

⁹ Cardale to Drummond, 19th February 1850, Northumberland Collection C11/22.

¹⁰ [H.Drummond], *Ministry of Instruction*, 9.

¹¹ Whitley, *Blinded Eagle*, 66.

... includes three distinct theories of the Church which cannot be made to harmonize.

1. As a child of the Reformation he accepted the Protestant doctrine of an Invisible Church of the Elect (Book III).

2. As a theologian he accepted the Catholic doctrine of Church government by Bishops possessing apostolic authority through a visible succession (Book VII).

3. As a political philosopher he believed in the mediæval Church-State, and as a practical statesman he accepted it in its modified national form subject to royal supremacy (Book VIII).

No wonder that men of different parties and of diverse opinions are accustomed to appeal to Hooker in support of their views!¹²

Since all appeared to a greater or lesser extent in Irving (sometimes as mediated by Coleridge) and Drummond, it is not surprising that tensions were also evident in their thought. However, there were limits to their debt to Hooker: Irving's move towards a remnant ecclesiology after 1831 went against Hooker's justification of national churches.¹³

Calvin and the Calvinist tradition appear to have been an important source for Catholic Apostolics as well as Darby: we have noticed the debt owed to Calvin by Drummond (partly *via* Robert Haldane) and Irving, as well as the latter's espousal of the Scots Confession of 1560. A lesser-known Calvinist source was the "Western Schism", some of whose best-known figures became Irvingites.¹⁴ This group's influence on Drummond seems to have been considerable, and doubtless laid the basis for his frequent recourse to the expedient of secession. One Swiss writer considered that Darby and Drummond were both chargeable with antinomianism in their teaching regarding sanctification by faith, their denial that individuals can contribute anything to their holiness, and their opposition to viewing sanctification in terms of obedience to the law¹⁵: all these were previously seen in the teaching of the "Western Schism".

Awareness of the extent to which Catholic Apostolics drew on this tradition, whether directly or through Irving, complements the attempts made to demonstrate the movement's debt to Orthodoxy by Flegg and Newman-Norton, themselves both within that tradition. While there is clear evidence of the liturgical dependence of Cardale in particular upon Orthodox sources¹⁶, as the theses of Flegg and Stevenson have shown, this is not the whole story and we should not rush to categorise Catholic Apostolic theology as Orthodox. After all, the movement sought to draw on what was good within *all* Christian traditions, not just one!

¹² Thornton, 96.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁴ *Christian Observer*, June 1839, 361.

¹⁵ Bost, 1.87.

¹⁶ *Readings upon the Liturgy* quotes from Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Jewish sources, but apparently not from Reformed ones.

In spite of the gaps in our knowledge of the sources for both movements, there is enough evidence available for us to conclude that they were shaped by the contemporary Romantic climate, a conclusion which has not always been sufficiently recognised. This is evident, for instance, in the debt each owed to the movement for prayer for the Holy Spirit which arose from Haldane Stewart's ministry: this was a version of the heightened sense of the supernatural and the perception of divine activity as breaking into the existing order which were features of Romantic religious thought. Coleridge's influence on Irving has already been noted, but W.W.Andrews also acknowledged a debt to Coleridge.¹⁷ David Brown, who followed A.J.Scott as Irving's assistant, drew attention to the paradoxical influence upon Irving of prophetic study: it gave full rein to his over-active imagination, yet impelled him to a literalistic approach to the Scripture text.¹⁸ Both the appeal made by prophetic study to the imagination and the emphasis placed on returning to the primitive sources could be seen as evidence of the influence on Irving of Romantic thought. Although there was a world of difference between the rigid literalism of the Darbyite dispensationalist system and the highly symbolic typological reading of Scripture based on Catholic Apostolic prophecy, both emphasised the authority of Scripture. The elevation of Scripture in relation to human creeds and confessions was not unique to the groups we have studied, for it could be seen in the Bible Society debates of the 1820s and the heresy trials which rocked the Church of Scotland after 1830. This, too, could be seen as a manifestation of the desire to rediscover the primitive sources for Christian belief. With respect, we must therefore reject any idea that each movement was *sui generis*, the more so because of the close parallels between them.

Parallels are evident between Darby and Irving in the area of their theological method, such as the emphasis on returning to the original sources, the view of the church as instituted in the New Testament as an ideal from which decline had taken place, the place given to conscience in the perception of truth, the aversion to logical thought and the predominant mystical or vague perception of spiritual and theological realities. These may well have been due to Romantic influence, and contrasted with the rationally-based approach popular in the previous century and still evident in thinkers such as Chalmers. It is also possible that the concept of a movement claiming to embody lost truth concerning the church and its hope itself owed more to Romanticism than has sometimes been acknowledged. In making such a claim about their ecclesiology, Darby and the Catholic Apostolics were continuing the pattern set

¹⁷ In an uncatalogued letter of 1853 bound in a volume of his writings in the British Library (pressmark 764i5) Andrews testified to Coleridge's influence upon his thinking as a young man.

¹⁸ D.Brown, "Personal Reminiscences of Edward Irving", *The Expositor*, 3rd series, vol.6 (1887): 258.

by their rediscovery of premillennial eschatology, which has been attributed to Romantic influence.

Yet we must not over-emphasise the importance of Romantic thought as a factor influencing both movements: it is possible to differentiate them from other Romantically-influenced movements sharing their ecclesiological concerns (such as Tractarianism), as well as from other movements making the same claims to eschatological discovery (which did not usually separate from the existing churches). Furthermore, there is no evidence that Darby himself read any Romantic writers, and so any influence upon him must have been indirect, perhaps through his college tutors.

6.2. Shared theological emphases

The three theological emphases which were part of the religious background to the Brethren and the Catholic Apostolic Church, have been demonstrated to be present in their theology as well - high ecclesiology, a robust view of divine sovereignty and human inability, and a desire for church life to be conformed to the primitive ideal.

6.2.1. *The church as constituted by the Spirit*

We have seen that both Brethren and Catholic Apostolics emphasised that the church was constituted by the Spirit's descent at Pentecost: they had a high view of such a body, for it owed its existence to divine action as part of God's sovereign purpose. In a sense, their ecclesiology was heightened by the contrast they made between the position and privileges of Israel and the church, a contrast which was given strength by their adoption and development of current dispensational ideas. Darby's dispensationalism was not unique, but was in measure shared by Catholic Apostolics (although they did not apply the distinction between the heavenly church and the earthly Israel in the same way). The parallels of belief in the failure of every human dispensation (a failure rooted in the nature of sinful humanity), the church's decline from heavenly-mindedness as it lost its expectation of Christ's immediate return, the "binding of the apostleship" as the apostles became unable to complete their mission on account of the church's backsliding, the role of apostles in restraining the forces of ruin, the church's fall into a ruined state after their death as it became inextricably tied up with a godless world, the gathering out of a faithful remnant from the existing dispensation to begin a new one, and the prospect of Christendom's destruction as a visible entity coupled with the divine restoration of all that promised in previous dispensations are all sufficiently close to be noteworthy. Darby's highly systematised dispensational hermeneutic bears comparison with the elaborate Catholic Apostolic system of typological interpretation of the Old Testament. On the Brethren side there was some embarrassment about the similarities, as Newton implied:

The fallen state of the Church - its need of the Spirit - the destruction which awaits every system which has been or is being formed by the world - the personal coming of the Lord Jesus, when judgment shall begin at the house of God;- these things are not the less true because they have been testified of by some at Newman-Street.¹⁹

However, it is difficult to account for the similarities by establishing either common sources or dependence of either group upon the other. All we can say for certain is that Darby and the Irving group took ideas which were present in the common stock of contemporary religious thought, and developed them in similar ways. Beyond this it is difficult to go: scholars are not agreed on the roots of the type of dispensational thinking seen in Darby and the Albury circle, and evidence is hard to interpret.

Caution is necessary in assessing the extent of the role of eschatology in the formation of Brethren and Catholic Apostolic ecclesiology (as opposed to the prominent place which it assumed in their theology). It is true that the soil in which both movements grew was that of expectation of the imminent Second Coming; Irving and Darby both engaged in date-fixing for eschatological events, and Newton, Open Brethren and the Port-Glasgow group all expected the Second Coming to occur before too long. Yet it is questionable whether eschatology was the *most* significant factor in the formation of their views; although the time was one of ferment, in which current events were often interpreted as bearing some kind of eschatological significance, it is unlikely that eschatology was originally a major factor in the events in Dublin which led to the emergence of Brethrenism.²⁰ Indeed, Elmore concluded that it was ecclesiology which gave rise to eschatology, rather than *vice versa*.²¹ Neither was eschatology a significant factor in the emergence or growth of other related seceding groups, such as the Walkerites, the "Western Schism" or the Strict Baptists.

While eschatology was undoubtedly significant in the development of Irving's thought, and hence of that of the Catholic Apostolic Church, it must be remembered that Irving (unlike Darby) was predisposed to his interest in prophecy by his contact with Coleridge, whose eschatology was of a very different kind - more philosophical and less biblically-based - from that of most of the Albury circle (of whose speculations he strongly disapproved) or the Brethren. Coleridge parted company with Irving over the latter's literalist hermeneutic, this being his chief disagreement with Lacunza.²² The role played by eschatology in the formation of these movements thus needs to be set against the wider intellectual, socio-political and spiritual context.

¹⁹ [Newton], "Doctrines of the Church in Newman St.", 126.

²⁰ Even modern dispensationalists acknowledge that the desire for fellowship was probably more important than the study of prophecy (Ryrie, 156).

²¹ Elmore, 21.

²² S.T.Coleridge, *Collected Works*, Vol.12, *Marginalia III. Irving to Oxlee*, eds. H.J.Jackson & G.Whalley, 417n.

Both movements comprised two groups which never quite merged: for each, division resulted from disagreement regarding the human outworking of the Spirit's ministry within the church, ecclesiastical authoritarianism being perceived as seeking to enforce universal submission. In the Darby Brethren and those who gathered under the restored apostles, there was an increasing bureaucratisation and centralisation, as well as an emphasis on the channels through which spiritual grace was to be received. Darby's horror of anything coming between God and the Scripture-reading believer produced in him a professed aversion to forming any theological system²³ or ecclesiastical structure: yet the Exclusive Brethren, like the Catholic Apostolic Church, were to become known for the rigidity of their ecclesiastical order and discipline. An increasing emphasis on structures led to allegations of authoritarianism, clericalism and a 'mechanical' concept of ecclesiology, dangers which seem to have been avoided by the Open Brethren and the Port-Glasgow group. However, Open Brethren and the Port-Glasgow group were accused of the opposite error, ecclesiastical anarchy.

6.2.2. *Radical Calvinism*

The Reformers saw the preaching of the Word and the right administration of the sacraments as marks of the church, by which they tested a body's claim to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic. Irving shared these emphases, being noted for his long sermons and his high views of the sacraments; the Brethren did to a certain extent, in that they insisted upon the need to allow opportunity for those gifted to minister the Word and upon the centrality of the Lord's Supper. Catholic Apostolics, however, while sharing the emphasis on the sacraments, tended to give less place to ministry of the Word within the setting of the Liturgy. Within the Eucharistic order, ministry was restricted to a brief homily, sermons usually being given at a different time and in an extra-liturgical setting.²⁴ To that extent they departed from their Reformed roots, meriting Davenport's description of them as a "reviving of Catholicism out of the midst of Protestantism".²⁵

However, some form of Calvinist theology was a controlling factor in the ecclesiology of most major thinkers among the Brethren and the Catholic Apostolics - even if negatively so, in the form of a reaction against classical formulations of Calvinism (as with Irving's reinterpretation of the doctrine of election). The Romantic movement provided an impetus for a return to Scripture, and a downgrading of the importance of creeds and confessions; such an approach was observable in a wide range of thinkers,

²³ Darby, *CW*, 33.9.

²⁴ *General Rubrics*, I.XI.1.

²⁵ J.S.Davenport, *Edward Irving and the Catholic Apostolic Church*, 18.

including Campbell, Darby, Drummond, Groves, the Haldanes and Irving.²⁶ However, the theology of the major figures among Brethren and Catholic Apostolics was still markedly Calvinistic in its emphasis on divine sovereignty and human inability to bring about God's purpose. It could be said that far from thinking their evangelical forebears too Calvinistic, these men considered that at certain points they had not been Calvinistic enough. To put this another way, they sought to be more radically Calvinistic than the previous evangelical generation, yet in a way which demonstrated that they were under the influence of the contemporary culture, for these radical doctrinal views have also been seen as evidence of Romantic influence.²⁷ Even the distinctive Catholic Apostolic use of typology could be seen as essentially Calvinist in its roots, for their typological use of the Old Testament bears comparison with the hermeneutical approach of Reformed covenant theology, with its emphases on the unity of all God's dealings with humanity and on the continuing validity of the Old Testament as an ecclesiological source.

The form taken by Calvinism in the Romantic period was marked by a stress on divine sovereignty and divine action as inbreaking into the established order, rather than providentially upholding it, hence the readiness of many to secede rather than work for reform within the establishment, and to reject the existing apostolic succession in the belief that a new beginning was required. If Darby cannot be called a Romantic, it is nevertheless true that his theological emphases matched the mood of the times. His Calvinism can be compared with the radicalising tendencies evident in other contemporary evangelical Calvinists such as Philpot and Irving and the Albury circle. All reacted against what they saw as evangelical optimism and self-sufficiency manifested in attempts at ecclesiastical reformation and social improvement. Each dispensation was meant to demonstrate human sin and inability to perform God's will, thus preparing the way for divine grace. In the thought of these radical evangelicals, the human situation, as well as that of the contemporary church, was depicted in starker terms than was customary in the moderate Calvinist evangelicalism which drew its inspiration chiefly from Jonathan Edwards and which remained influential among Open Brethren.²⁸ Here we appear to have two movements which transposed this

²⁶ Newton was something of an exception, since he sought to frame his theology in the terms of accepted doctrinal standards wherever possible. This, linked with their divergent views of the nature of religious truth, may provide a clue to the difference of approach between Newton and Darby.

²⁷ See, for example, Hempton, "Evangelicals and Eschatology"; Stunt, "Geneva and British Evangelicals"; idem, "John Henry Newman and the Evangelicals".

²⁸ Open Brethren tended to retain the belief in the invisible unity of true believers which had predominated in the previous generation and which found expression in the foundation of the Evangelical Alliance (although the very fact that such a visible body was felt necessary may itself be evidence of the same emphasis on the importance of visibility which marked the Tractarians as well as Darby and the Catholic Apostolics).

radicalised Calvinist anthropology into an ecclesiological key.²⁹ There was a strain of almost fatalistic submission to events, visible in situations as diverse as Darby's condemnation of attempts to restore local church life along New Testament lines and Catholic Apostolic refusal to shore up their hierarchy after it began to disappear with the first deaths among the apostles. However, such apparent pessimism should be balanced by their expectation of a better future after Christ's return, when everything on earth that had been ruined in previous dispensations through sin would be restored to its intended perfection.

Such an estimate of the ecclesiologies of the Brethren and the Catholic Apostolic Church is corroborated by a consideration of the areas where their ideas took healthiest root. If there was the degree of spiritual vitality in the Church of Ireland which Acheson has claimed, and moderate Calvinism was as influential there as sources imply; if the ground was already prepared by other Calvinist seceders before Brethrenism and Irvingism reached Plymouth and south Devon; and if the influence of Darby and of Irvingism in Switzerland was primarily in areas already affected by the Réveil (itself a rediscovery of Calvin's theology), then these facts support the thesis that both movements represented a restatement of Calvinist ecclesiology in the light of the climate of Romanticism, which was a movement marked by discontent with the status quo and a desire for a return to the primitive order. This answered to the discontent created by evangelical awakening in these localities, which shared the first-generation evangelical weakness in the area of ecclesiology.

Against this, however, it must be acknowledged that the denial by Darby (followed by many among Open as well as Exclusive Brethren) and Catholic Apostolics that saints of all dispensations formed part of the one people of God (although they would have agreed that salvation was always by grace) put them in disagreement with traditional Reformed ecclesiology and its nineteenth-century exponents. It must be said that no thinker in these groups adopted the whole of Calvin's ecclesiology; conversely, for none was Calvinist thought the sole source for ecclesiological development.

6.2.3. The church's apostolicity

Preoccupation with the note of apostolicity was not unique to these groups; although most marked in the thought of the Tractarians, the various groups of extreme evangelical seceders were in their own way also seeking to rediscover what it meant for the church to be apostolic in faith and order. In contrast with earlier evangelicals,

²⁹ Krapohl has also paralleled Darby's ecclesiology with his anthropology, the believer being positionally and eschatologically sanctified, even though the root of sin remains (200). However, this approach does not account for the inevitability of the church's apostasy, as opposed to its failure, since Darby believed in the final perseverance of the saints and thus never accepted the possibility, let alone the necessity, of the believer apostatizing.

Brethren and Catholic Apostolics insisted that unity could only be secured by recovering apostolic ecclesiology, rather than by attempting to transcend ecclesiological differences.

Significantly, Darbyites and the Catholic Apostolics considered that apostolicity required living apostles. Part of the reason for this distinctive approach may be the Romantic emphasis, exemplified by Coleridge, on the necessity of a suitable outward form to express the inward spiritual reality. Connected with this was the desire to return to primitive sources, which in this context meant a return not only to the theology, but also to the practice, of the early church. Unlike the Tractarians, the Brethren and the Catholic Apostolics were not content with going back as far as the early fathers, but insisted that return had to be to the New Testament itself (perhaps because of their evangelical and therefore biblicist roots). Apostles were, of course, the New Testament form of church government *par excellence*.

Even Darby, although he does not appear to have read Coleridge, shared to the full in this desire to return to the sources, the belief in the need for inward realities to take outward expression, and the centrality of apostles to what he saw as the New Testament pattern of church government. Without this, he would never have seen the gap between the first and nineteenth centuries as unbridgeable, and consequently would probably not have formulated his distinctive concept of the irreparable ruin of the church.

6.3. Ecclesiological questions raised

Two major issues are raised by the examination of Brethren and Catholic Apostolic ecclesiology. One relates to our ideal of the church - the nature of its divinely-intended constitution: the other to our perception of contemporary ecclesiological reality - its imperfect state.

Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, in his seminal work, *The Household of God*, has asserted that "it is the presence of the Holy Spirit that constitutes the Church."³⁰ Any idea of the church which can be defined without reference to the Spirit is inadequate.³¹ He points out that the Spirit of Christ cannot be dissociated from the body of Christ, from which he concludes that a recognition of the Spirit's presence among a particular group raises the issue of its churchly character.³² As a Reformation scholar has written, "In the midst of our secular culture, we need to appropriate Calvin's vision of the church as the special creation of the Holy Spirit ..."³³

³⁰ L.Newbigin, *The Household of God*, 90.

³¹ Ibid., 95.

³² Ibid., 93.

³³ George, 248.

We have seen that this emphasis was crucial to Brethren and Catholic Apostolic ecclesiology, but it needs to be recovered by their contemporary evangelical and restorationist successors. For example, a recent evangelical symposium deals with issues of membership, denominations, doctrinal purity, and charismatic experience, but gives no sustained consideration to the church's nature and constitution.³⁴ This is typical of the preoccupation of evangelical ecclesiology with the church's shape and structures at the expense of the underlying issues of its nature and constitution.

Idealist visions of the church are sometimes accused of being impracticable, because they often fail to do justice to the tension between unity or catholicity and purity. Restorationist ecclesiologies tend to focus on purity, and risk becoming highly sectarian, the more so for disclaiming sect status. Even though Darbyite Brethren and Catholic Apostolics both claimed to be movements for the whole church's renewal in a manner reminiscent of early Moravian or Methodist societies, this was not borne out by their later history, which tended to be that of their protagonists writ large (Open Brethren tended to make more limited claims, yet demonstrated more catholicity). The church must hold to both sides of the tension, as Catholic Apostolics began to do: it is eschatology which may enable us to do so, since an eschatologically-orientated perspective recognises the ideal to which the church is called and to which it will ultimately conform, but also emphasises that it is the whole existing church (and not any one part of it in isolation), in which that ideal is imperfectly realised, to which the call is addressed.

Restorationist movements always hope to succeed where all previous generations of the church have failed, often because they believe, as these groups came to believe, that they occupy a centre-stage position in God's purpose. Such movements need to recognise that in the existing situation it is impossible to set up a body claiming to be *the church*.³⁵ Perhaps they would do better to follow the Brethren and the Catholic Apostolics in identifying with the church's failure in confession and humiliation. This need not involve accepting a dispensationalist ecclesiology, or the belief that ruin is irreparable.

The second issue raised for contemporary ecclesiology is that of the state of the empirical church, and the proper response to it. In spite of the criticisms of Brethren and Catholic Apostolic thought which may be made, those concerned with the church's apostolicity have much to learn from these two groups, and especially from their insistence that this is not merely an abstract principle but is enshrined in the ministry of individuals given by Christ to the church. It is a ministry which they considered all the more necessary because the church, like the times, was out of joint.

³⁴A.Gibson, ed., *The Church and its Unity* (1992).

³⁵ Cf. Darby, *CW*, 1.162-3.

The possibility of recognition of such ministers by the historic churches has been opened up by the World Council of Churches report *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.

In the history of the Church there have been times when the truth of the Gospel could only be preserved through prophetic and charismatic leaders. Often new impulses could find their way into the life of the Church only in unusual ways. At times reforms required a special ministry. The ordained ministers and the whole community will need to be attentive to the challenge of such special ministries.³⁶

Such apostles should be regarded as belonging to the whole church rather than to any one group within it, as Catholic Apostolics maintained. We need to draw upon insights from New Testament scholars such as J.A.Kirk, who sees apostles as those given by Christ to plant churches; fruit rather than exclusive claims is the proof of their apostleship, and he argues that they may be given at any time.³⁷ Such recognition may be interpreted in a manner consonant with the Reformed theological tradition, in view of the possibility left open by Calvin that exceptional crises in the church called forth exceptional ministries, such as that of the apostle / evangelist.

Another issue raised by the study of these groups is the idea that the empirical church, far from being what it should be, is ruined. We would do well to consider how to incorporate the idea of ruin into ecclesiology, without being accused (as Darby was) of countenancing the development of doctrine in a way that brings it into conflict with Scripture: theological anthropology may prove a fruitful source of illuminating parallels, as it appears to have done for Darby. A due sense of repentance for the failure of God's people to be faithful to their calling is evident in Scripture: Daniel's confession on behalf of the Jews that "to us belongs confusion of face" (cf. Daniel 9.7) is one which could be emulated by modern ecumenists. This may yet prove to be the most significant contribution of these ecclesiologies to the church. It is certainly consistent with a recognition of the true nature of the church's unity, whereas some forms of ecumenism may be held to lack such an awareness: "To them [Brethren], an ecumenism which distinctly acknowledges the different Churches, even while working to bring them together, is in fact the negation of the *existing* unity of the Church, and the negation of the unity of Christ, of whom this Church is the body."³⁸

The idea that the whole church is ruined is a belief which is likely to emerge in modern restorationism, now that it is beginning to face the problem of maintaining the vision among the second generation of members, who grew up within the movement rather than converting to it. Linked with this problem is that of the disappointment or disillusionment to which members of such movements are prone when failure occurs,

³⁶ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, WCC Faith and Order Paper 111 (1982), §33.

³⁷ J.A.Kirk, "Apostleship since Rengstorff: Towards a Synthesis", *New Testament Studies* 21 (1974): 249-64.

³⁸ [G.F.Moede], "Assemblies of Brethren", *Ecumenical Review* 24 (1972): 139.

or when success appears indefinitely delayed. Within the movements we have studied, this was rumoured to have appeared in Irving and Drummond, as well as being clearly visible in the writings of former members of the Exclusive Brethren. Disillusionment in the Catholic Apostolic Church may well have precipitated the New Apostolic schism; before that the crisis of 1840 produced a lassitude which was not remedied for some years.

However, the idea that ruin was inevitable, while valuable as a psychological insight into what has happened in all religious revivals, is not to be seen as a statement of what is necessarily true in theological terms. There is a need to go beyond the failure of the vision, beyond possible despair at an unrelievedly negative prospect for God's people: this requires that we balance awareness of human failure with faith in the restoring grace of God sovereignly active in and for His church, in fulfilment of His purpose to present it to Christ as a spotless bride (Ephesians 5.25-27). It is as we regain an eschatological perspective which stresses that God is working in and through human history to achieve His sovereign purpose that we can look forward to perfect correspondence between the actual and the ideal states of the church in the way that Brethren and Catholic Apostolics did.

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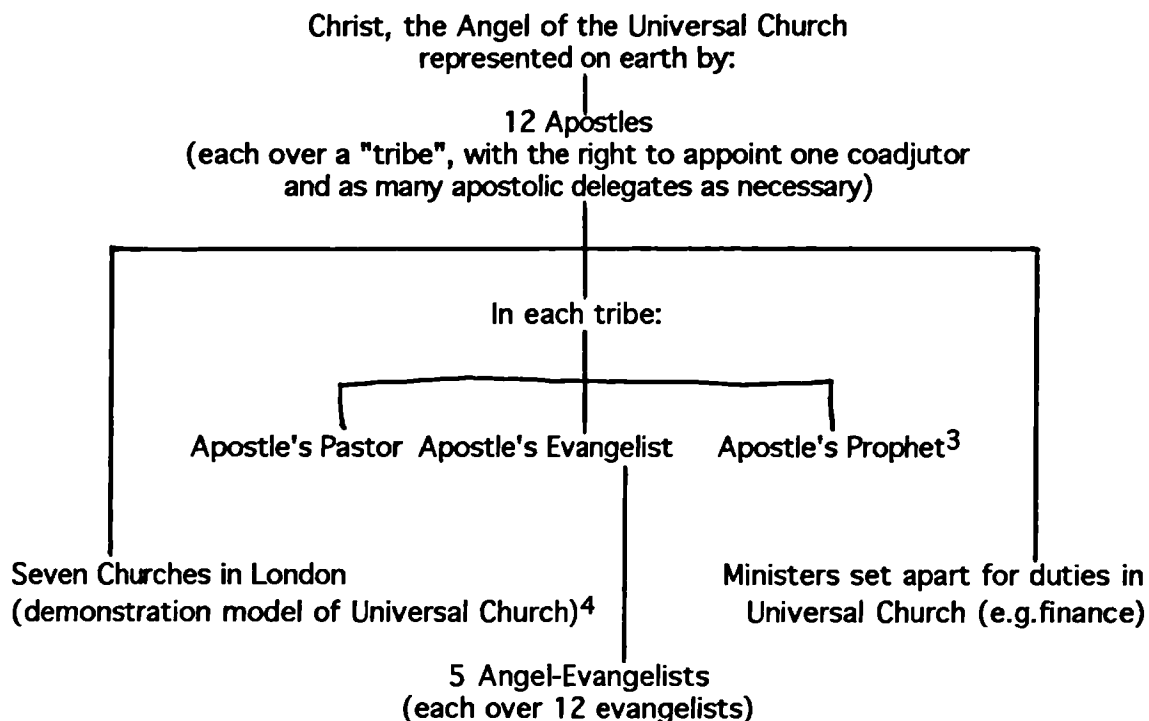
Ecumenical Review

Edinburgh Review

Evangel
Evangelical Quarterly
Expositor
Gentleman's Magazine
Glastonbury Bulletin
Gospel Magazine
Investigator
Journal of Ecclesiastical History
Journal of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship, later Christian Brethren Review
Journal of Theological Studies
London Quarterly Review
London Review
Mirror
Morning Watch
New Testament Studies
Old Church Porch
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Preacher
Presbyterian Messenger
Restoration
Scottish Journal of Theology
Studia Liturgica
Themelios
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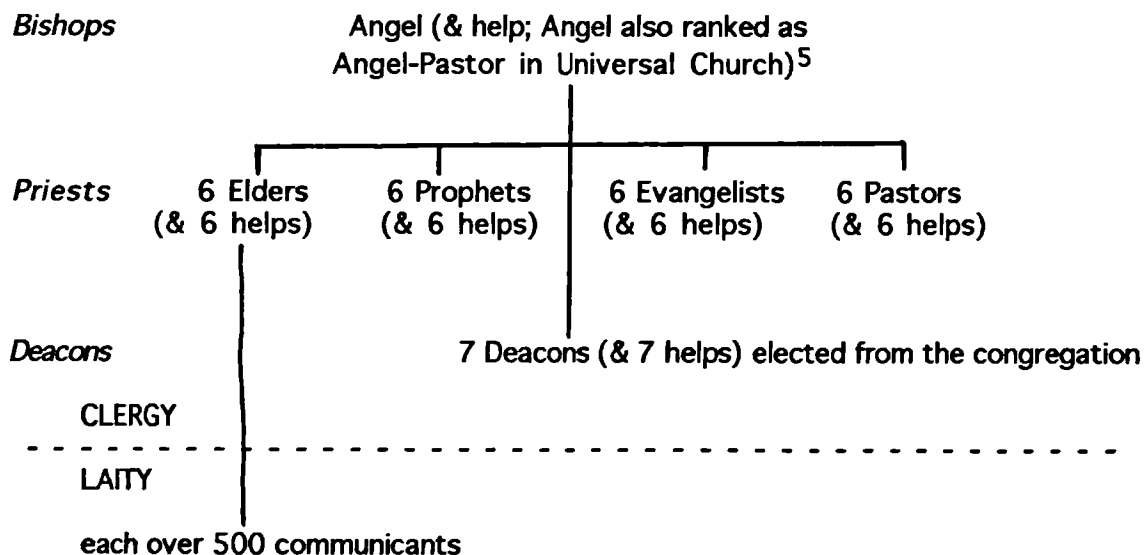
APPENDIX 1: THE STRUCTURE OF THE CATHOLIC APOSTOLIC CHURCH¹

Universal Church²



Particular Church

(a microcosm of the Universal Church)



From the congregation were drawn lay ministries: subdeacons, deaconesses, doorkeepers, acolytes, singers etc.

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- ¹ Most information is drawn from R.A.Davenport, 232-3; E.Miller, *Irvingism*, 2.51-7. The chart is slightly simplified, and only shows the structure as it developed during the period covered by this thesis.
 - ² Universal church ministers were drawn from the rank of angel ([Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 67).
 - ³ Within each "character", a "pillar" served as *primus inter pares* and link with the apostles ([Woodhouse], *Narrative*, 47).
 - ⁴ From 1846, the Seven Churches were placed directly under Cardale as Pillar of Apostles ([Dowglass], *Chronicle*, 40-1). In 1853 their angels were appointed as Seven Deacons of the universal church, with responsibility for managing church property on the apostles' behalf (Copinger, "Annals", 112, 116; Rawson, "Church in Southwark", 15).
 - ⁵ Angels were to the particular church what Christ was to the universal church (Carlyle, *Mosaic Tabernacle*, 25).

APPENDIX 2: THE CATHOLIC APOSTOLIC APOSTLES¹

<i>Name</i>	<i>Denomination</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Tribe (jurisdiction)</i>
Nicholas Armstrong (1801-79) Formerly served with the Reformation Society.	Anglican	Clergyman	Naphtali (Ireland, Greece)
John Bate Cardale (1802-77) Defended Irving 1832.	Anglican	Solicitor	Judah (England)
Thomas Carlyle (1803-55) Defended McLeod Campbell 1831. Not to be confused with the writer.	Presbyterian	Advocate	Issachar (N.Germany)
Henry Dalton (1805-69) Ejected from his living 28th July 1835 for allowing manifestations during services.	Anglican	Clergyman	Simeon (France, R.C. Switzerland)
David Dow (1798 - 1878) Refused calling as apostle, although later joined the Catholic Apostolic Church.	Presbyterian	Clergyman	-
William Dow (1800-55) Ejected from his living for allowing the gifts.	Presbyterian	Clergyman	Joseph (Russia)
Henry Drummond (1786-1860)	Anglican	Banker	Reuben (Scotland, Protestant Switzerland)
Henry King (1787-1865; later changed his name to King-Church)	Anglican?	Clerk in the Tower	Gad (Denmark, Holland, Belgium)
Duncan Mackenzie (1785-1855) Elder of Irving's church; called as replacement for David Dow. Withdrew 1840.	Presbyterian	Chemist	Benjamin (Norway, Sweden)
Spencer Perceval (1795-1859)	Anglican	M.P.	Asher (Italy)
Frank Sitwell (1797-1864)	Anglican	Gentleman	Zebulun (Spain, Portugal)
John O Tudor (1784-1861)	Anglican?	Artist	Levi (Poland; also India, Australia as "suburbs" of Christendom)
Francis V Woodhouse (1805-1901)	Anglican	Barrister	Manasseh (Austria, S.Germany; also N.America as "suburb")

¹ Information drawn from R.A.Davenport, 110-1; Flegg, "Catholic Apostolic Church", 60-1, 65; Newman-Norton, "Biographical Index"; Shaw, 80-3; "The Lord's Restored Apostles"; *New Acts of the Apostles*, 414.